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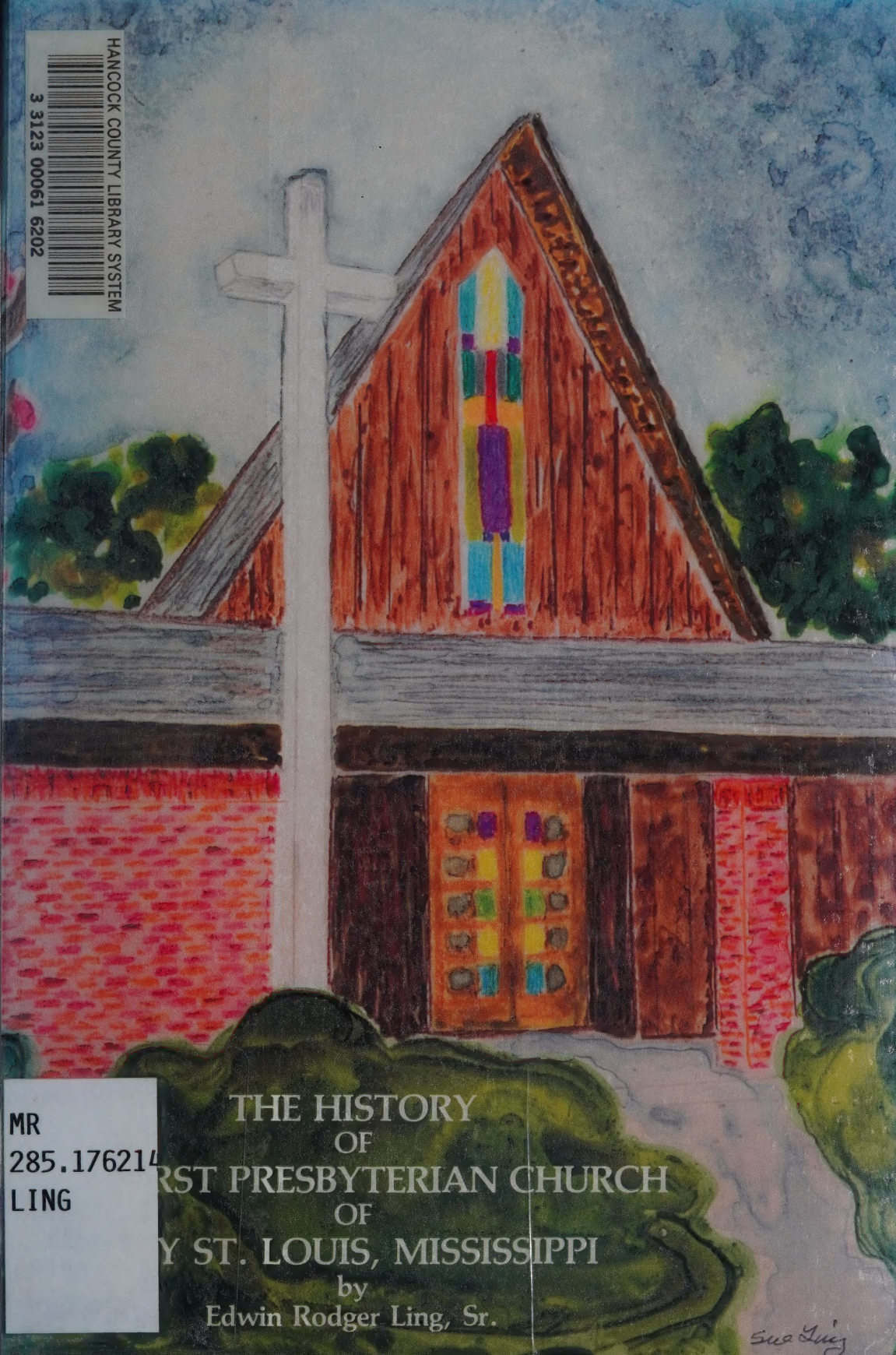

THE HISTORY OF RST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF Y ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

by

Edwin Rodger Ling, Sr.

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THE HISTORY
OF
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

by

Edwin Rodger Ling, Sr.

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True Story

This is a true account. The persons and places are real, as are all accounts. Any omissions or mistakes of fact are those of the author made innocently without malice or forethought.

This book is sincerely and lovingly
DEDICATED
to
OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST,
Who should be First in our Hearts always,
to
CHRISTAL,
who is among the Last of the First,
to
RICHARD AND ALICE,
who are First among the Last,
to
JOE AND VIVIAN,
who are First among Firsts,
to
MAX AND FAYE & DWYN AND CHRIS,
whom one needs only to know to know why,
but especially to
SUE,
who returns my love
&
keeps me on my toes,
with special thanks
to
NOEL PHILLIPS & DOLPHIN PRESS, INC.

"The Lord is my shepherd...
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
(Twenty-third Psalm.)

FOREWORD

This history of the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi in large measure is reflective of its antecedents in which, in the early years, women had virtually no identities beside that of their husbands, if they had one, or outside of their families. For instance, rarely is a married woman given her Christian name in the archives; the name used is almost always that of her husband.

The church is also obviously a reflection of the times it is in. In this regard, it is noted that, in the 50's, it was a button-down, from the top-down society, and so was the church in most ways. The rebellious 60's, furthermore, are also reflected in the church, while the 70's and 80's churches are similar to those eras, too: placid, flacid and plastic, as were the times themselves. The exceptions are also found. On the other hand, the advent of the 90's brought change to the secular world as well as to the church. More "enlightenment" is now permitted, a more relaxed atmosphere, as are changes that could have been overwhelming --but weren't.

This church has a reputation for both Christian friendliness and as a survivor. It has been seasoned by its storms, it has healed its rifts, and it has matured into a church of reconciliation. God has blessed it and will continue to do so, for it is God's children who worship here.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: The Beginning.....Page 1

Chapter 2: The Early Years..... 11

Chapter 3: The Apogee..... 23

Chapter 4: The Storms..... 31

Chapter 5: The Changes..... 47

Chapter 6: The Transition..... 53

Chapter 7: The New Beginning..... 61

Chapter 8: The Leaders..... 73

Chapter 9: The Deceased..... 74

Chapter 10: The Current Members & Friends. 75

References 76

CHAPTER 1: THE BEGINNING

This area of Mississippi has had an exceptionally colorful history, its paths and byways being trod by Native Americans, French explorers, pioneers, soldiers, outlaws, farmers, fishermen, lumberjacks --even astronauts. It also teems with wildlife, including deer, raccoons, opposums, rabbits, squirrels, alligators, armadillo, fish and birds of all descriptions, kinds and types. There once was an Indian village here called "Chicapoulas," meaning "bad grass," presumably in reference to the "rock-a-chaws" grass which still abounds in the area. The Indians were Choctaws, by far the strongest tribe in Mississippi.

The land was reportedly first colonized by a group of soldiers under the command of the famous Pierre le Moyne D'Iberville in 1699, who planted the fleur de lis of France on the Gulf Coast. Some historians say that he gave the name "St. Louis" to the bay he visited there, in memory of Louis IX of France. Others maintain that the name was derived when the bay was later explored on the Day of St. Louis by Jean Baptiste le Moyne Bienville, who gave it its present name of Bay St. Louis as a result. In any event, Monsieur Bienville and his companions spent several days in this beautiful area, hunting and fishing, filling their boats with fish, venison, buffalo and other game before departing.

The land passed from the French rule in 1763, after the French and Indian War, to Britain. In 1793, at the close of the American Revolution, the land became a part of West Florida and came under Spanish domain, coming into the possession of the

United States in 1810. At that time, the Mississippi Gulf Coast was divided into two parcels. One section, on December 14, 1812, was formed into a county named after John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress. In 1841, Harrison County was grafted out of the then Hancock County, and, in 1890, Pearl River County was similarly established, reducing Hancock to about a fourth of its former size. The City of Bay St. Louis became the county seat in 1860, and it is one of the oldest cities along the Coast, as well as of the United States. Over the years, the area has become more settled, homes, schools, churches and roads being built; however, it remained primarily an agricultural economy, being sparsely settled, with an income dependent on the natural resources of the area: traditionally timber and water transportation. Today, Bay St. Louis is known throughout Mississippi for its charm and its unique cultural heritage, albeit much the same could be said of its neighboring communities of Waveland and/or Pass Christian, even more prosperous.

Even in its earliest days, it is to be noted that the Mississippi Gulf Coast was a "world apart" from the rest of Mississippi. Its flat, coastal plains were and remain in sharp contrast to the piney-wooded hills which begin some twenty or so miles inland, and its people have always been a fun-loving, hard-working, fiercely-independent breed, with French, Italian, Greek and German names prevailing, sometimes anglicized, sometimes not. Its quality and way of life are also distinctive.

Thus it was no surprise that, in 1949, it was belatedly recognized that there was no Presbyterian church in Bay St. Louis and that members of that faith had to either worship in churches of other denominations or to travel to nearby churches across the Bay for Sunday services.

Realizing the need for a local church, Mrs. Fred Koeniger, her daughter Miss Sybil Koeniger, and the Misses Hilda and Barbara Sick first discussed the possibility of banding together the Presbyterians of the City of Bay St. Louis to remedy this situation. Soon the spark of zeal that had been lighted in a neighborly conversation burst forth into a flame of action, and, on November 21,

1949, the Misses Barbara and Hilda Sick contacted the Reverend J.N. Brown of the First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport, Mississippi, who enthusiastically agreed to preside at a meeting with the Presbyterians of the Bay.

Invitations through the local press and personal contact were extended to all local Presbyterians interested in uniting for worship, and on December 13, 1949 the first official meeting for the establishment of a Presbyterian Mission took place in the home of Mrs. Fred Koeniger at 636 North Beach Boulevard. It was fitting that this gathering should assemble at the very place where the inspiration of uniting the Presbyterians in worship had been born.

During this meeting, plans were formulated to have religious services regularly on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at Mrs. Fred Koeniger's home. At the same time, officers for the Mission group were elected as follows: Mr. Christian Reab, Chairman; Miss Barbara Sick, Secretary; and Miss Sybil Koeniger, Treasurer. The ministers present were the Reverends Brown and L. A. Beckman, Jr., the latter from Ellisville, Mississippi who was the Superintendent of Home Missions for the Meridian Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church. Those attending this first meeting and forming the nucleus of the church were Miss Barbara Sick, Miss Hilda Sick, Mr. and Mrs. Christian Reab, Mr. and Mrs. Camille Schaefer, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Koeniger, Kathleen Schaefer, Richard Schaefer, and Miss Sybil Koeniger.

On Sunday, January 8, 1950, the first service was held with the Reverend Brown officiating and with the original eleven members in attendance. As Miss Sybil A. Koeniger, Historian for the Church put it in her unpublished history of the church a year after the event, "There was no organ, no piano, no pulpit to enhance this first worship in the spacious living room of the Koeniger home. But there was little need of these exterior trappings because in the heart of each one present there was a peace, in the knowledge that God's Will had been fulfilled. His children had been brought together in prayer and love."

Thereafter, the Reverend Beckman drove from

Ellisville on the second and fourth Sundays for these four o'clock services, although, occasionally, guest ministers substituted for him. A year later, on January 14, 1951, the first anniversary service was conducted by the Reverend Beckman with an attendance of approximately fifty persons, many of whom were from his Gulfport church.

Within this time, the Presbyterian Mission had grown in membership. Miss Laura O'Leary, Mrs. H. Gibbs, Mrs. M. Jokich, Mr. C. Henry, Mr. and Mrs. F. Pierce, and Miss M. Allred had joined the original eleven. It had grown in material acquisitions, too: Mrs. F. Koeniger had donated a Bible, Mr. Reab had made and given a pulpit, and the ladies, through their circle organization, formed on May 23, 1950, had purchased a piano and communion service. Moreover, the Claiborne Avenue Presbyterian Church in New Orleans had donated the first hymn books.

After each afternoon service, it was customary that the Koeniger family serve hot coffee to the congregation, home-made cookies or sandwiches being donated by the other ladies. This hospitable gesture gave the occasion for informal discussions of the many hopes for the future church and helped to cement the bonds of sincere Christian fellowship.

Which hopes were materialized in May of 1953, at which time a renovated Army barracks building was purchased at 138 De Montluzin Street (currently 140). It was bought from Mrs. Gladys Bartlett Jones, who had used it as a workshop named the "Blue Bottle Art Studio." Of the purchase price of $4,500 for the building, five hundred dollars was paid by the local group, the balance being loaned by the Home Mission Board of the Meridian Presbytery, Synod of Mississippi. The cost of the act of sale, $75, was paid by Mr. Reab.

It is one thing to have a building, another to have a church. So Mr. Reab, together with Messrs. Schaefer and Henry, set out to convert the art studio into a church. They gave unstintingly of their time and labor, and, after much toil and sweat, they soon had a large room for church services, a Sunday school room and a utility area,

the latter consisting of a kitchen, storeroom and lavatory.

In the midst of the rejoicing the foregoing had brought, a note of sadness came with the death of Mrs. Fred Koeniger. Because of her demise, services in her home were suspended from November until early in December of 1953. Although a pioneer member and one of the organizers of the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis, Mrs. Koeniger was deprived of the earthly satisfaction of attending the first service in the little church for which she had been so responsible.

That happened on December 14, 1953. After three years of planning, saving and hard work, a church edifice was prepared in which to praise God. True, as the archives note, there was "nothing in the church but a few folding chairs, pulpit and piano, but as Reverend Beckman had stated in his sermon, the members had reached their first milestone in establishing a place of worship for those of the Presbyterian faith." (Koeniger, id., page 6.)

In this regard, the zeal and interest of the Reverend Beckman never waned during his years of piloting the mission congregation. Neither distance, inclement weather or fatigue ever deterred him from being present to preach the worship service. Under his fatherly encouragement and wise guidance, the members of the church were able to face and overcome difficulties and obstacles that are always attendant to beginnings.

Another memorable day in the annals of this church was that of June 20, 1953, when the Reverend Edward Morren became the regular if not full-time pastor. This graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary was secured through a call extended by the Meridian Presbytery. Services continued to be held on alternate Sundays, though, since Reverend Morren also served the Poplarville and McNeil Presbyterian churches.

Under his capable leadership and encouragement, the little church progressed not only spiritually but financially, as well. A mid-week service was established, meeting each Thursday night, and, in April, 1956, services were begun to be held every Sunday, with Pastor Morren preaching

on the first, third and fifth Sundays, the pulpit being filled on the second and fourth Sundays by elders from the Gulfport church, such as Mr. Harold Barber and Mr. D.A. McCandliss.

The First Church Building

By this time, also, sufficient funds had been saved to permit further renovations. Exterior changes by way of siding, a brick-veneered front and the addition of a steeple helped to convert what was once an art studio into a quaint, little church building. The interior was also refurbished, e.g., by the painting of rooms, sanding of floors, and the adding of air conditioning and stained glass windows.

The pews used were originally the property of the Carrollton Avenue Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, which had given them to the Ocean Springs Church when it was being built and the New Orleans church was being remodeled. Recently, the Ocean Springs church had expanded, and the hand-hewed wooden pews, rubbed by usage through the years to a patina of satin smoothness, were loaned to the

Bay St. Louis one until such time as that church reached another expansion program and added seating capacity. They would then be passed on to some other young and developing congregation or be returned to Ocean Springs, or so it was then thought.

The first regular music of the church was begun on April 3, 1955, with Miss Temple Perkins serving as pianist. She served until September, 1956, at which time Miss Edith Magee became pianist. Several months later, Mrs. Whitney L. Pinell assumed this duty and so served until the organization of the choir on September 19, 1958, when Mr. Henry Gustine became the organist. The first choir was composed of Mrs. Camille Schaefer, Mrs. Whitney L. Pinell, Dr. Walter A. Russo, Mrs. Muriel B. Fisher, Mr. S.K. Kepner, and Mrs. Henry Gustine.

The first family night supper was held on July 20, 1956, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Al Voight, with approximately fifty persons in attendance. These affairs continued and were held thereafter regularly in the Sunday school room of the church on the second Thursday of each month.

On the other hand, the beginning of the Sunday school was more humble. For one year, starting in January of 1954, there were only three children: Kathleen Schaefer, Richard Schaefer and Alvin Marshall. They met faithfully every Sunday morning at ten o'clock with their teacher, Mrs. George Marshall. The classes grew, enrollment increasing, until another Sunday school room was required, which was completed in the fall of 1958.

The Men of the Church were also organized then: October 27, 1958. Regular meetings were held on the Monday following the third Sunday of each month. Their row would be a rockier one, though, and for many years there would be no organized Men of the Church.

In the meantime, on March 31, 1957, the Presbyterian Mission reached its full stature and was reorganized as the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis. The Commission of the Meridian Presbytery, consisting of four ruling elders and four ministers, conducted the service, which was attended by many friends from Gulfport. The

ministers were the Reverend L.A. Beckman, Jr., Superintendent of Home Missions in the Presbytery; Dr. Norton Smith, Professor of Bible at Belhaven College; Dr. G.T. Preer, Student Minister at Mississippi Southern College; and the Reverend Edward Morren, Pastor. The Ruling Elders were Messrs. H.B. Barber, a lawyer, D.A. McCandliss, an agricultural and nursery operator, Paul L. Wright, Jr., an accountant, and W.L. Rigby, Superintendent of the Gulfport City Schools.

The following thirty-one worshipers were united to become charter members of the newly organized church: Mrs. Charlotte Burns, Mrs. A.J. Butz, Colonel and Mrs. P.S. Finn, Jr., the daughter of Col. and Mrs. Finn, Miss Sybil Koeniger, Mrs. George Marshall, Mr. and Mrs. John Middleton, Mr. and Mrs. W.P. McCutchon, Miss Laura O'Leary, Miss Betty Ann McCutchon, Bill McCutchon, Bob McCutchon, Earl F. Gates, Mrs. Whitney L. Pinnell, Mr. and Mrs. T.T. Reboul, Mr. and Mrs. Christian L. Reab, Dr. and Mrs. Walter Russo, Mr. and Mrs. Camille Schaefer, Richard Schaefer, Miss Kathleen Schaefer, Mrs. Al Voight, Mrs. Margaret Wilson, and Mr. and Mrs. H.G. Wingo.

The following words of the pastor were printed in the Bulletin for that Sunday. "It is indeed a happy moment that we of the Presbyterian church in Bay St. Louis should become an organized church. We are grateful to God for this blessing of His upon the work that has made this possible."

Following the service, the charter members elected their officers, to wit: Elders: Mr. Chris Reab, Mr. T.T. Reboul, Dr. W.A. Russo, and Mr. W.P. McCutchon; as Deacons: Mr. Camille Schaefer, Mr. Earl Gates, Mr. H.G. Wingo, and Col. P.S. Finn, Jr. In May, 1957, Mr. Reboul was elected Clerk of the Session, as the organization of the Ruling Elders is called; Mr. Schaefer was elected Chairman of the Board of Deacons or Diaconate; and Mr. Gates became Treasurer.

In November, the first budget was proposed, the Board of Deacons launching a drive to solicit every member of the congregation for a pledge, and approximately $2,300 was so pledged. So financially successful was the church that the next year an additional Sunday school room was provided,

as was a lovely electronic organ, the latter purchased in the spring.

On October 21, 1958, the Reverend Morren was made the Stated Supply at the church. At the end of the year, on December 31st, there were thirty-eight members inscribed on the church register, with an average weekly attendance of thirty-five. Those persons who had joined since the church's organization were Mr. and Mrs. R.M. Teague, Mrs. Muriel Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. Albion Ancker, Mr. and Mrs. Sewall K. Kepner, and Mrs. Catherine Whitehill.

The tiny grain of faith that had inspired the founders of the Presbyterian Mission had grown ever stronger among the energetic members of the First Presbyterian Church in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. What else did the Lord have in store for them and for their church? Only time would tell.

Standard Bulletin Cover

CHAPTER 2: THE EARLY YEARS

The next few years saw great improvements and changes in the growth and structure of the church.

On January 18, 1959, a congregational meeting was held immediately following Sunday morning worship for the consideration and approval of a church budget for 1959. Prepared by the Board of Deacons and approved by the Session, it was accepted by the congregation and totaled $4,000.

This same month, it was determined that, since several of the Women of the Church were unable to attend an afternoon meeting of the organization, but could attend one in the morning, two circles would be formed, one meeting in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Over the years, the numbers would change, at times there being three circles, sometimes two, only one at others.

The church was also presented with new hymnals, and the old ones were "loaned" to the Poplarville Presbyterian Church, with the exception of nine of the "blue" ones which would be retained for the choir's use.

A new and larger pulpit now enhanced the church sanctuary, too. This beautiful pulpit was made and presented to the church by Mr. Chris Reab. Mr. S.K. Kepner assisted him in the making of this fine piece of furniture. The old, smaller pulpit, also made and donated by Mr. Reab, was now used in the Sunday school. The larger pulpit has since been donated to a church in Mexico; the smaller one is still retained by the church in Mississippi.

Considerable thought had been given to purchasing a plot of land on which to build a house to serve as a manse; however, the church was not

immediately able to raise the necessary funds for this purpose. The Session and Board of Deacons, therefore, sent an overture to the Meridian Presbytery requesting the use for this purpose of approximately $12,000 then in the hands of the Presbytery obtained from the sale of a manse in Pass Christian. (It had earlier been determined by the Presbytery that the Bay St. Louis church could and would readily handle any residents of western Pass Christian that were Presbyterians, and it has. Pass Christian is another lovely residential community, handsome and prosperous, famous and fashionable, with a broad, white beach, stately homes and a love of Southern living.) The answer was in the affirmative, the funds provided as a loan for a term of ten years, free of interest.

At a special meeting of the Session held on July 19, 1959, Reverend Morren's withdrawal from the church as pastor was accepted, effective October 31, 1959. In his absence, the pulpit was filled by Elders Harold Barber, D.A. McCandliss and Paul Wright of the First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport.

A pulpit committee was thereafter formed and, after due deliberations, on Sunday, November 1, 1959, a memorable one, the Reverend Dr. Edward A. Lindsey became the new Stated Supply minister to the church. He was a native Mississippian, having been reared on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in Pass Christian. A graduate of Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, he was married to the former Jane Stormont, a graduate of Austin College, Sherman, Texas.

A get-acquainted reception for the pastor and his wife was held on Sunday, November 22, 1959. Guests were greeted by representatives of the Women of the Church and received in the Sunday school room. Members of other Protestant churches in the city called throughout the afternoon to welcome the Lindseys to Bay St. Louis.

During the year, the following new members were received into the membership of the church: Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Stevens, Leslie Stevens, Paul Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Monroe, Mr. and Mrs. Kirkland S. Rheams, and Mrs. Edward A. Lindsey.

The Reverend Edward A. Lindsey

This year had seen a substantial increase in the membership of the church, improved attendance at the church services, a definite aim toward a church manse and a larger sanctuary (which idea had grown steadily), as well as a general increase in the optimism and enthusiasm of all members of the church. This was evident in the budget for 1960, which was for a total of $5,600, an increase of $1,600 over the 1959 budget.

Note is also to be taken of the decision, made after much counseling and prayer, by Mr. William E. Monroe to become a candidate for the ministry, which was approved by the Committee on Christian Education of the Presbytery of Meridian in January of the new year.

On March 27, 1960, at a congregational meeting, it was approved that the so-called "Drake property" on Ulman Avenue be purchased for a price of $20,000, thus providing not only a manse but room for a new, bigger church itself, the culmination of a number of dreams. On April 3, 1960, approval was also given to sign and validate all requisite legal documents to close this deal, including the obtaining of an $11,000 loan from the Peoples Federal Savings and Loan Association. On April 21, 1960, the property was so acquired.

This location being about twenty-five feet above sea-level, one-half block from the Gulf, is one of the highest sites in Bay St. Louis. A short distance away is the highest elevation (twenty-six feet) to be found between Corpus Christi, Texas and Apalachicola, Florida. Moss-draped oaks, azalea and camellia bushes and a lovely lawn enhanced the grounds, with a graceful old home to be occupied as the manse.

Renovation began immediately on the latter. The interior was freshly painted, floors sanded, new wiring and lighting fixtures installed and the kitchen remodeled. Upon completion of this work, Dr. and Mrs. Lindsey moved in, and, within a few weeks, they were given an "old fashioned house warming" by the Women of the Church.

In August, Mr. and Mrs. Monroe departed for Texas where he would undertake to complete his academic work at the University of Texas and his seminary training at the Austin Theological

Seminary.

This same month, the Women of the Church purchased and donated an Eastman movie projector and screen to the church. (The latter is still in use.) This was their special project for the year. Later in the year, the Frank Stevens family also left for Austin, Texas, and the Whitney Pinnells moved to Mesquite, Texas. Mrs. Pinnell had served as church organist and choir director for several years.

The church was fortunate to have another member, Mrs. Robert Teague, to immediately assume the latter duties. Mrs. Teague was an accomplished organist, having served in that capacity at the First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge for a number of years. Another accomplished musician in the church was Mrs. Lindsey, who substituted when Mrs. Teague was unable to perform her duties.

Started this year by the Board of Deacons was a Memorial Fund for special gifts to the church. Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Mitchell made one of the first gifts to this Fund in memory of Mrs. Sheldon Rice. The communion cloths then used were a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Chris Reab, and the bulletin board at the front of the church was a gift from Messrs. Kepner and Reab.

The 1961 budget was approved on November 6, 1960, in the amount of $6,000. In connection therewith, a combined Thanksgiving "Get Together" and "Loyalty Supper" was held on November 10, 1960 in the Sunday school rooms of the church to give members an opportunity to make their pledges for the coming year. Each member also brought cans of food, which were later distributed to needy families in the community.

In a special meeting held in Columbia, Mississippi on November 29, 1960, it was voted that the Presbyteries of Meridian and Mississippi be merged. This merger, effective January 1, 1961, would form the South Presbytery.

During this year, the following members had been received into the church: Mr. Mac Lindsey, Mr. Charles H. Faust, Mr. G.C. Kirkpatrick, Mrs. H.R. McEuen and Mrs. G.C. Prewitt. The year had been a memorable one from the standpoint of progress in the church, both materially and spiritually. The

next year would see the fruition of its fondest dreams and hopes, as a building was erected on the "Drake property" purchased.

In the beginning of the year, Dr. Lindsey was again appointed as Stated Supply Pastor for the church, and he was just what the church needed. Bay St. Louis was then a small town, with the greater percentage of its residents retired, elderly people and a large portion of the property owners (nearly one-half) merely "summer" or "weekend" people, i.e., "second" home families.

Shortly after the beginning of the year, the officers of the church were Pastor: Reverend Dr. E.A. Lindsey; Elders: Mr. W.P. McCutchon, Mr. T.T. Reboul, and Dr. W.C. Russo; Deacons: Mr. C.G. Schaefer, Chairman, Mr. S.K. Kepner, Treasurer, Mr. E.F. Gates, and Col. P.S. Finn, Jr.; and Trustees: Mr. E.F. Gates, Mr. K.S. Rheams and Mr. T.T. Reboul.

During the year, the following members were received into the church: Miss Joan Sylva, Mr. and Mrs. A.D. Whitlow, Mr. and Mrs. E.J. Loflin, Mr. George C. Prewitt, and Mrs. and Mrs. Joseph Trest and their four children Mary L., Gracie J., Jennie S. and Robert Bryce. Letters of dismissal were issued to out of town churches for Mrs. Jan Pinnell and Mrs. H.G. Wingo.

However, the congregation was saddened by the untimely death of Mrs. Anne McCutchon, wife of Mr. W.P. McCutchon, on August 9, 1961. Mrs. McCutchon was tragically shot by accident by her son. The Session on August 14, 1961 passed a resolution with regard to her passing, which read, in part, as follows:

> Mrs. McCutchon was a wife, mother, daughter, and sister of high character. We think of her as one of the "Elect ladies." She was an active and inspiring member of the church -- always ready to do her share of the Lord's work, and would have become the President of the Women of the Church on October 1st. The family, the church, and the community have lost a great Christian, a loyal friend, and a citizen of good works. It was a blessing to have her in our midst.... May the heritage of

her faith become the increasing treasure of the family, and the inspiration of the church. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. God bless her memory.

Also upon her passing, many of Mrs. McCutchon's friends, knowing of her interest in the new church which was to be constructed soon, instead of sending flowers, sent contributions to the Memorial Fund which had been established the year before.

As a result, the beautiful stained-glass cathedral window behind the altar was dedicated to her memory. The communion table, the Celtic cross and two vases of polished brass which are placed on the communion table when it is not being used as a communion table were donated by the Women of the Church, also in her honor, adding to money that Mrs. McCutchon's father and brother had given in her memory. Mr. and Mrs. Wood, friends of the Women of the Church, donated two burnished brass collection plates to complete the set, and a Bible for the altar was given by the five sisters of the Zimmerman family. All of these items are still in use.

Ever flexible, because of a loss of members, the Women of the Church combined its two circles into one again, in October, until such time as new members would be available.

Further, at the beginning of the year, arrangements had been made to apply for a grant from the Home Missions Board of the Presbytery, and, in due time, a grant of $2,500 was authorized for the erection of a new church and educational building. The Lord even provided a buyer for the old church building, and the Trustees were directed to sell it and place the proceeds in a building fund. However, the sale was contingent upon the congregation being permitted to meet in the old church until such time as the new sanctuary could be completed sufficiently to be occupied.

Thereafter, a building committee was appointed, consisting of Colonel P.S. Finn, Mrs. Muriel B. Fisher, Mr. S.K. Kepner, Mr. W.P. McCutchon, Mrs. J.M. Middleton, Mrs. George C. Prewitt, Mr. T.T. Reboul and Dr. Walter Russo. It immediately became active, both in planning and in

fund-raising.

Mr. Kenneth Teague, son of the organist, made several trips from Houston, where he lived and worked as an architect, to consult with the building committee and drafted a plan for the sanctuary and educational building, which was subsequently accepted by the committee, as well as the congregation. There would be a sanctuary with an interior both restful and worship inspiring, a fellowship room, modern kitchen, pastor's study behind the sanctuary, three Sunday school rooms, utility closets, and rest rooms, all air conditioned and centrally heated. Along the front of the building, there would be a walkway with low, overhanging eaves, which would make it possible for each Sunday school room to be entered from the outside and the children to be protected from the elements.

The building committee met once each week and held consultations more often, when necessary. The result would be a monument to the consecrated effort and enthusiasm with which this committee served. Mr. Teague even cut his fee in half.

Nevertheless, during the construction, it was determined that the building could not be entirely completed with the funds at hand, so the decision was made to have the contractors finish the sanctuary and the men of the church would finish the interior of the Sunday school rooms, pastor's study, etc. Messrs. Reboul, Middleton and Kepner did the paneling, while Dr. Russo and Mr. McCutchon put on the trim. Messrs. Gallassero and Kepner made and hung bulletin boards and clothes racks and also made some changes in the front of the church edifice. Further, Messrs. Reab and Kepner built a baptismal font and a settee for visiting or assistant ministers, and Mr. Reab made two lovely stands for flowers to correspond with the wood and color of the baptismal font, too, all of which are used even to this day. At a later date, it may also be noted, the men of the church placed closets in the fellowship hall so that materials could be stored therein and that could be locked, for security purposes.

The New Building Under Construction

The formal dedication of this building would be held on Sunday, April 15, 1962, truly a day for rejoicing. At the morning service, Dr. Claude A. Pritchard, Secretary of the Home Missions Section of the Board of Church Extension, preached an inspiring sermon. In the afternoon, the Reverend W.J. Stanway, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg preached the dedicatory sermon entitled, "The Church of the Living God," using as his text 1 Timothy 3:15 and 16. He was assisted by Drs. Pritchard and Lindsey. Also attending and assisting in the service were the Reverend Robert T. Coit of Long Beach; the Reverend Thomas Wharton, Pineville; Dr. R.L. Summers, Gulfport; the Reverend Merlin Usner, Picayune; and the Reverend John T.N. Keels of Hattiesburg, Executive Secretary of the Presbytery of South Mississippi.

Special music sung at this service were "Open the Gates to the Temple" by the choir and "Bless this House," a solo by Mrs. Christal Schaefer. The church was filled, with many of the townspeople of all faiths being present for the dedication and staying for the reception following the ceremonies in the fellowship hall.

Early in 1962, in cooperation with the other

Protestant churches in the area, a church survey was undertaken. At the time of the survey, the results seemed to be very discouraging. Not many of the people contacted indicated a preference for the Presbyterian church; however, the Lord works in many ways to bring about growth and changes in His church, as we will see.

The United States Government, through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), announced on September 7, 1961 that the Michoud Assembly Facility in eastern New Orleans, Louisiana (an hour's drive away) had been selected as the site for the industrial production of certain rockets being developed to send Americans to the moon as a part of President Kennedy's Apollo Program. Here the Chrysler Corporation would produce the Saturn I-B stage or Baby Saturn rocket used in early Apollo missions and The Boeing Company would manufacture the Saturn I-C rocket or first stage of the giant Saturn V launch vehicle designed to propel men to the moon. This gigantic rocket would stand as tall as a 36 story building and its first stage alone would generate seven and one-half million pounds of thrust.

Then, on October 25, 1961, NASA announced that it had selected a 13,550 acre site in Hancock County, Mississippi as the place where the first and second stages of the moon rockets would be static test fired. Here, a new multi-million dollar space-age facility would be hacked out of the soggy Cypress groves near Devil's and Honey Island Swamps, Dead Tiger Creek and the East Pearl River. It would be a contest with the Mississippi mud, mosquitos and snakes, with man eventually prevailing.

What this meant was an influx of families, at first construction workers, then others such as engineers, technicians and administrators, many moving to the Bay St. Louis area and many being Presbyterians. Moreover, being young, they brought with them small children, quite a contrast to the congregation that was, up to then, made up mostly of elderly people whose children were grown and lived elsewhere.

Due to the fact that the number of active women had decidedly increased, the Women of the

Church voted in 1962 to again have two circles, one to be known as the "Morning Circle," the other as the "Afternoon Circle." The former was formed particularly to offer an opportunity for mothers with children in school to attend a circle meeting without having to neglect their children. It was agreed that a baby sitter would be provided to take care of pre-school children, the Women of the Church to bear this expense.

Also in 1962, the following baptisms were recorded: Laurie Gretchen Anderson, Joseph Dale Simpkins, Patricia Ellen and Julia Jeane Payne, and Warren LeRoy and Donna Kay Sick, twins. Received into the church on profession of faith were Laurie Gretchen Anderson, Kit Campbell, Chris Goettge, Sallie Jo Scharf, Dr. Dwight A. Payne and daughter Katherine Grace, and Kenneth T. Teague, Jr. Received into the church by letter or certificate were Mr. and Mrs. Carl Anderson and their daughter Christine Eager, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Cook, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Calvin, Mrs. George Campbell and son John, Mrs. Edward Crawford, Mr. and Mrs. C. Max Dossett, Mr. and Mrs. G.P. Fillingame, Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. Gallassero, Mr. and Mrs. Keith Hammond and son John, Mrs. Nellie Hadley, Miss Camille Lamphier, Mr. and Mrs. John Landon, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Phillips, Mrs. Dwight A. Payne, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Scharf, Mr. David W. Smallwood, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth T. Teague and daughter Colleen, and Mr. and Mrs. Edward (Scotty) Thomson. The latter, Scotty and Doris, would be the 107th and 108th persons to join the church from its beginning. Max and Faye Dossett had been the 75th and 76th, while the Cooks were the 79th and 80th.

The Sunday school also showed a healthy growth. In summer, when vacationers and summer residents were there, the attendance had always risen. Now, however, the Sunday school had a steady attendance. There were eight in Kindergarten, 11 in the Primary Grades, seven Juniors, five Young People, and there were 11 in the Men's Class and seven in the Women's.

Furthermore, the choir of the church, under the direction of Mrs. Robert M. Teague, was doing outstanding work. Sopranos were Mrs. Christal

Schaefer, Mrs. Ramona Cook, and Mrs. George Prewitt; Altos were Mrs. E.A. Lindsey, Mrs. Muriel Fisher, and Mrs. Norma Landon; Tenors Mr. Max Dossett, Mr. John Landon, and Dr. Walter Russo; and Basses Messrs. Mac Canaga, Harold Cook and S.K. Kepner.

As the Church Historian for this year, Mrs. S.K. Kepner, put it in her unpublished history of the church: "In spite of much illness in her family, Mrs. Teague has been ever faithful in her work as director and organist. The results of her work have been most gratifying and the choir has established an enviable reputation in the community. None of this choir is a paid member but all of them take time out from a very busy life to serve in the choir, and they sing because they have it in their hearts to sing. When Mrs. Teague was unable to be present, Mrs. E.A. Lindsey, wife of the pastor, was an able substitute and the church is indebted to her for her many talents."

Mrs. Kepner also noted that "Before the Christmas festivities began, the choir secured new robes. Some of these robes were paid for by the choir members, and all of the robes were made by choir members or other members of the congregation.

"Under the direction of Mrs. Teague and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Kenneth T. Teague, assisted by members of the children, a carol choir was organized. This choir was composed of the older children but they also organized a choir of the smaller children called 'The Little Angels' choir. These choirs sang for the Christmas services and sang carols at the home for the aged and the patients at the hospital. Their songs and bright faces brought joy to many."

The year came to an end with the church cooperating in a city-wide movement to bring the Reverend Lane Adams, pastor of the Key Biscayne Church in Miami, Florida to Bay St. Louis for a community Protestant inspirational series of services. A series of cottage prayers was scheduled before the week of services began, and it was hoped that these services would be a source of renewed spirit and effort among the Protestants of the community. Including <u>this</u> church.

CHAPTER 3: THE APOGEE

The First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis cooperated with the other Protestant churches of the city to bring the Reverend Lane Adams for a series of inspirational services. They were held February 18, 1963 through the 22nd. For the two weeks preceding, as previously noted, cottage prayer meetings were held in the homes of members of the churches participating, and they were held at different times of the day, thus enabling all who desired to attend one or more.

The services themselves were held at the First Baptist Church at 7:30 in the evening with the combined choirs of the churches that were sponsoring the events furnishing the music. In addition, the Reverend Adams held Bible studies each morning at 10:00, the theme for which was "How can I know I am a Christian?" At the conclusion, all agreed that this event had been a spectacular success.

In the meantime, the First Presbyterian Church choir had grown, with many fine voices added to the others that had contributed so much to the services in the past. As reported by the church historian for this year, Mrs. A.E. Voight, "The church was most fortunate to have Mrs. E.R. [Ingrid] Ling, a new member of the church, take over the duties of organist and choir director during Mrs. Teague's illness. Mrs. Ling plays the organ beautifully and has a very lovely singing voice; she is a regular member of the choir when not acting as organist."

Under the direction of Mrs. Lindsey and Mrs. Kenneth Teague, a junior choir was organized this year. These young voices took part in both the

Lenten and Easter services, as well as the Christmas Pageant held the Sunday before Christmas, the latter under the direction of Mrs. Harold Cook and Mrs. Kenneth Teague.

On June 2nd, a congregational meeting was held for the purpose of electing additional elders and deacons. After ordination and installation on July 14th, the officers of the church were Moderator: the Reverend Dr. Edward A. Lindsey; Elders: Theo T. (Ted) Reboul, Jr., W.P. McCutchon, W.C. Russo, S.K. Kepner, Carl Anderson, Edward Calvin, Max Dossett, Fred Phillips, Harry Scharf, and Scotty Thomson; Deacons: Mac Canaga, Ronald Goettge, Kirkland Rheams, Kenneth Teague, and Harold Cook. The Clerk of Session was Ted Reboul; Chairman of the Diaconate: Kenneth Teague; and Treasurer: Mac Canaga. Incidently, Mac had been the 114th person to join the church, his wife the 115th.

At the beginning of the calendar year, there had been 84 members on the church's rolls. Received into the church during the year were, on profession of faith, seven; by certificate, 24; a total of 31. Losses were two by death, five transferred to inactive, and four were dismissed to other churches, a total of 11. Net for the year was 104, a net gain of 20 members.

Those received into the church by profession of faith were Rolland Armstrong, Duane Armstrong, Nathan Goettge, Thomas J. Landon, Laura Muehl and Timothy O'Neal Craig. Received by letter and statement were Mr. and Mrs. John Landon, Mr. and Mrs. Erick Muehl, Mrs. Rolland Armstrong, Mrs. Ethel Wandel, Mr. and Mrs. Mac Canaga, Mr. and Mrs. John Hill (the 128th and 129th members), Mr. and Mrs. Jordan Shearer, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Russell, Dr. and Mrs. Wm. D. Atchison, Mr. and Mrs. James A. Dees, Miss Susan Irene Dees, Miss Mary Jane Dees, Ed and Ingrid Ling (the 136th and 137th, respectively), Mr. and Mrs. Robert Everly, and Mr. and Mrs. Felix Miller. A number of these persons were associated with the nation's space program.

One who wasn't but who was here because of the space program was the avuncular Max Dossett. He and his gracious wife Faye had a very nice "fishing camp" in what became NASA's Buffer Zone (no homes thereafter would be permitted there), and Max and

Faye had found a place in Pass Christian to replace it. On the water, a beautiful site. So this very successful businessman and shopping center developer ended up with a beautiful home on the water in Pass Christian. They eventually moved there from Hattiesburg, their prior home. And they joined this church, as a result.

Also, this year saw the passing away of Mr. Charles Gallassero, who had been elected a Deacon but did not live to be ordained, and Mr. Chris Reab, an Elder who had been a charter member of the church and was greatly missed. Mr. Reab had been a contractor by trade and had helped muchly in the new church building; sixteen memorial gifts were presented to the church in his name.

On July 20th, the annual church picnic was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson in Pass Christian, transportation being provided for all who needed it. Each lady prepared food, and a delicious picnic dinner was enjoyed by all. Entertainment and a good time followed. In addition, at the end of the summer, it was noted that Mrs. Lindsey had become seriously ill and was hospitalized for many weeks. The Women of the Church, during her long convalescence, prepared meals each day and took them to the manse, among other duties they assumed. All in the church were grateful when Mrs. Lindsey was able to take her place in the choir and at the Women of the Church meetings.

During the year, Messrs. Calvin, Thomson and Dossett took turns teaching the men's Bible study class, while the ladies' class was taught by Mrs. Muriel Fisher. At the end of 1963, the Sunday school had an enrollment of 61, which was an increase of about 30% over the previous year.

The Sunday of December 22nd was an important one for the children of the Sunday school. They then participated in the first Christmas Pageant ever held at the church, under the direction of Mrs. Kenneth Teague and Mrs. Harold Cook. It was held in the afternoon in connection with a candlelight service for the Joy Gift. All agreed that this pageant should be repeated, since the children did exceptionally well and those who attended thought it a very impressive service.

Another first was the Vacation Bible School held July 8th through the 19th. The superintendent was Mrs. Erick Muehl. It also was very successful, and the consensus was that it, too, should be continued.

Both would be, and the next year would show continued growth in the church. As a matter of fact, it would reach its highest number that year: 1964. The year would show 10 additions by profession of faith and 29 by certificate. Losses amounted to only 11, none by death. The total membership, thus, at the end of the year, including 17 non-resident members, would be 143. Among those joining the church this year would be Dr. Charles J. Cox, Jr. and his gracious wife Evelyn, a nurse, the 145th and 146th persons.

The Women of the Church, under the leadership of Mrs. John Landon (whose husband had come to this area to work at the Mississippi space center), had formed a new circle, one to meet in the evening. This was to meet the needs of women who work or who had small children. It was headed by Mrs. Mac Canaga (who had also come to this area with her husband who was employed at the space center, too). Serving on the Program Council was Mrs. Ingrid Ling, another newcomer whose spouse worked at both of the space centers (dividing his time between the Michoud Facility in New Orleans and the Mississippi Test Facility). Ingrid Ling also was in charge of the Joy Gift Service that year, which included a Children's Pageant, followed by a social hour in the fellowship room with sandwiches, cookies and coffee served by the Women of the Church.

Each of the circles had their own projects. The afternoon circle donated $50 towards the beautification of the church grounds, as well as visiting the sick and shut-ins at the hospital and rest home. They also assisted the morning circle by saving coupons and stamp books to equip the kitchen. The morning circle itself continued to purchase stainless steel flatware for the kitchen, save coupons and stamps for dishes, etc., and carried on an eclectic visitation program. On its part, the evening circle grew from four members when it was organized in October to 15 by the end

of the year. Its major project was collecting clothes for the Palmer Home (a Presbyterian orphanage) and repairing them.

A very successful Vacation Bible School was conducted during the summer, under the tutelage of Mrs. Kenneth Teague and Mrs. Mac Canaga. The Sunday school continued to grow, as well. At the end of the year, enrollment stood at 98, an increase of 29. Youth Fellowship was also initiated this year with the first meeting on December 6th. Prior to this, the young people of the church took part in the Protestant Youth League. Now, they could be an integral part of that group, yet carry on their own programs, too.

The year 1965 showed a small gain in members, including the inactive, but, after transferring these from the membership roll, the church experienced a decrease in active, supporting members. The Session determined that, after corrections, it had only 124 members at the end of 1964, there being 12 additions, for a total of 136, minus four deaths, 23 moved to the inactive roll and dismissed, plus one other dismissal, for a total (at the end of the year) of 108.

The Sunday school enrollment was in a decline, too, with an average attendance of 60. Mr. and Mrs. John R. McPhail were the directors during the year of the Youth Fellowship, and Mrs. McPhail also was elected President of the Women of the Church. (Mr. McPhail, it is to be noted, worked at the NASA facility in Hancock County.) It was further noted that, for the fourth year in a row, there was no longer any organization known as the Men of the Church.

On December 26th, Dr. Lindsey announced to the congregation that he intended to retire on December 31, 1965, although he would stay on until the church had a new minister. In addition, it was announced that a congregational meeting was being called for January 16, 1966 for the purpose of electing a pastor nominating committee to look for and recommend a favorable prospect. At this time, the Session consisted of Dr. Lindsey, Moderator, T.T. Reboul, Clerk, and Messrs. Max Dossett, Walter Russo, W.P. McCutchon, S.K. Kepner, W.F. Phillips, and Scotty Thomson. The Board of Deacons were John

Landon, Chairman; John Lewis, Secretary; Robert Taylor, Treasurer; and Mac Canaga, Harold Cook, Kirkland Rheams, Kenneth Teague, and John McPhail.

Near the end of the year, Hurricane Betsy struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It was the night of September 9-10th. The storm's 110 mile-per-hour shrieking winds punished structures, roads and grounds, damaging many homes in the area. However, not as severely as in New Orleans where 81 persons were killed and the damage was in the millions.

The church's historian for this year, Mrs. W.F. Phillips, thereafter wrote: "Much damage caused. Homes damaged and many swept away. There was no damage to the church property. The members helped the less fortunate in many ways; i.e., by giving clothing, bedding, groceries, etc. The church set up an emergency fund of $200.00 to help any of our members in need. Fund used very little as members self-sustaining."

However, one of those suffering a great deal of damage during Betsy was Max Dossett and his lovely wife Faye. They had purchased a lot and constructed a beautiful home on a bayou, with swimming pool, located at 151 Hillcrest Road in Pass Christian. Their spacious and beautiful home was built more than 30 inches above the required elevation, so it was considered especially "safe."

For that reason, five neighbors joined the Dossetts at their home to "ride out" Hurricane Betsy. Unfortunately, the water just kept rising, and soon it had inundated the house. Max and his party desperately got in a boat, which had previously been pulled for safekeeping on its trailer into the carport, and they weathered the remainder of the storm there --in that boat in the carport!

The water did not rise sufficiently to make them leave the carport, by inches, but it did virtually destroy the inside of their beautiful home. "It was just like a washing machine," Max later described it to the author. "Everything was simply churned, like in one. For instance, the freezer had gone through a wall. It was awful."

Yet the Dossetts rebuilt, as did most of those who suffered losses in this hurricane. Little did

they know that this was merely a precursor to Hurricane Camille soon to follow. Nor was this the only storm cloud on the horizon. Divisions in the church, as well, would soon be manifesting themselves. The next few years would be stormy ones in many and varied respects.

Faye & Max Dossett

Christal & Camille Schaefer

Richard Schaefer

Kathleen Schaefer

CHAPTER 4: THE STORMS

1966 saw one person added to the church's rolls by profession of faith, one on reaffirmation and 13 by certificate. There was a loss of two by death and three by transfer. Moreover, a pulpit committee chaired by Max Dossett at first voted to call a minister who declined, then settled on the Reverend Malcom A. Bonner, a recent seminary graduate. The latter was on November 6th, at which time, also, a church budget of $16,162 was agreed to.

Prior to this, on May 21st, John Middleton, Jay Howe, Robert Warner and John Klock were elected Deacons. Furthermore, Mrs. Mac Canaga had led the Vacation Bible School, and, on July 24th, the debt to the Presbytery was retired with the help of a grant from the Commission on Church Expansion. John McPhail was in charge of Sunday school that year; because there were only two youths in the church, the Session acceded to a request that they meet with the youth of the Long Beach Presbyterian Church.

The pulpit committee was dissolved on December 5, 1966, and the Session then had its first meeting with the new pastor, Reverend Bonner. His wife, Mary, would be the 210th person to have her name put on the membership rolls of the church.

The next year, Ingrid Ling was approved by the Session as the new organist and choir director. However, others of the so-called "newcomers" in and to the church were thought to be causing "problems" in the church, or so it was alleged. In part, this was because they simply were "new" to the area and not totally familiar with all the nuances thereof.

Nothwithstanding, many had served in responsible positions, as Deacons and even as Elders, in other Presbyterian churches, many Southern. Nor did they all understand why women were denied any role as an officer of the church, even as a Deacon. When one, a lady, requested an explanation of this policy of the Session at a congregational meeting held on January 29, 1967, the answer given by the Clerk of the Session left the woman in tears. Later, Ingrid Ling and John Mefford individually wrote the Session letters requesting an apology for that person, all to no avail. The Session refused to acknowledge that there were any problems.

These two would write again, as reflected in the Minutes of the Session dated March 2nd. Reference was therein made to the announcement in the Bulletin of February 13th that, "after much discussion and study of scriptural teaching, the Session does not recommend that women be elected to the office of Elders and Deacons." In their letters this time, Ingrid Ling and John Mefford were additionally critical of the Session for not electing additional Elders, even though below the number that should be on the Session.

As the Session had a right to do under the Book of Order. It is also to be remembered that these Elders were elected, at that time in this church as in many of that era, for life. Moreover, their micro-management was pervasive and all encompassing. For instance, they approved all the Bible study materials, all music, all Sunday school teachers, all Vacation Bible Study teachers and materials, <u>even</u> the budgets of the Women of the Church and Men of the Church, as well as all officers of these two organizations elected by their members.

One must remember, too, that this was a time when the "separate but equal" doctrine had been outlawed by the United States Supreme Court and school desegregation had been ordered to be carried out with "all deliberate speed." Troops had previously been called out to integrate the Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Mrs. Rosa Parks had already sparked a boycott of the bus lines in Montgomery, Alabama, thrusting the

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and his nonviolent vision into the foreground of the burgeoning civil rights movement. "Freedom riders" had long since invaded the South, "sit-ins" at lunch counters were commonplace, as were "pray-ins" at segregated churches and similar activities at theatres, libraries and museums --most fostered by so-called "outside agitators," the segregationists claimed, which was in large measure true. It was a necessity.

It was a one-party South in those days, the Bible-belt South, the poll tax South, overwhelmingly rural, the poorest of all regions of our country, its poverty exacerbating every issue, the least educated, consumed by its traditions, Southern graces and manners, courtliness and affability, all masking a self-delusion and xenophobia that was just under the surface. These were destructive years of racial tension which sapped the energy of the region for years and greatly undermined the South's voice in the nation.

As these newcomers to the area began to exert influences on the community and the church, resistance was engendered and encountered. Suggestions were made that women might play a larger role in the church and the newcomers not be relegated to the Diaconate always, as well as that new blood in and on the Session might be in order, along with recommendations that the Session keep the congregation more and better advised, which was equally sought. These items were repeated, always being rebuffed. Soon there was little communication between the congregation and its ruling body, at least insofar as the newcomers were concerned. Most of them, any way, not every one of them being of this mind. Some were rebuffed by the "progressive" attitudes of the others, thinking of themselves as "conservatives" or members of the Old Guard, if they thought in these terms at all. Some did not.

The rift that had hit this congregation was not uncommon --not then. Few then, or now, are willing or able to talk freely about basic schisms and what they were or are bottomed on. Nobody wants to publicly talk about the true reason(s). And the only things that will unlock such a church

split are communication and compromise. Too bad that, often in a church division like this one, religious organizations mask the conflict and pretend that other, smaller issues, such as the cost of a new roof, the color of new carpeting, or when the elements in communion should be taken, are the basic divisive issues. If the real truth ever were known, should surface, they think the congregation might end up the laughing stock of the entire community. It might well, too.

Thus, they refuse to openly discuss the conflict, bearing the hostility in silence, when it would be so much, much better to heal such rifts and move forward with a common purpose. All of which begins with a little honest talk and the willingness to compromise. That's what was then needed to heal the racial and political differences that divided the nation so that the South might be a full partner again in the country's political and economic mainstream. It was just as much needed at 114 Ulman Avenue, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

In order to further move this situation along, Ingrid Ling finally asked a number of her church friends to meet at her and Ed's home on the beach in Waveland. Most if not all who attended this meeting had been Elders in other Presbyterian churches and were sorely disappointed to be denied an opportunity to so serve the Lord in such a fashion here.

Everyone there agreed that this sentiment should be expressed at a congregational meeting soon to be held. Despite his protestations, primarily around his argument that he had not been a very good churchgoer for some time, because of the rigid, dictatorial methods of the Session, as he saw it, Ed Ling was chosen to be the spokesperson for the group, primarily since he was a lawyer and better versed at such things.

He did so reluctantly, yet forcefully, requesting solicitously that the ruling body seriously consider electing replacements for several vacancies which hadn't been filled and/or by enlarging its membership. He noted that, since the members of the ruling body (only men at the time were considered eligible) were elected for life, some new blood might be in order. Better

communication was also in order, he argued. However, his pleas met a stony silence. A palpable one. A threatening one.

In the meantime, he had agreed to return to Huntsville, Alabama and the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center where he would immediately assume the duties of Deputy Chief Counsel and Acting Chief Counsel. Before that, however, he was requested to meet with the Session re his request to the Session at the recent congregational meeting. He did so on March 7, 1967, meeting with the minister and the following Elders: T.T. Reboul, Dr. Walter Russo, and Max Dossett. Absent was Scotty Thomson.

At this meeting, which had been called for the sole purpose of hearing him, Ed was given the opportunity to "state his feelings with the operation of this church and his feelings to different members and toward the Session.

"Given the opportunity by the Session to discuss his difficulties, Mr. Ling did so for approximately 31 minutes and the crux of the entire thing seemed to be that he is dissatisfied with every phase of our church. He severely criticized Dr. Russo and Mr. Reboul,... and specifically stated that the 'Session took a holier than Thou' attitude when discussing matters during a congregational meeting. He further stated that the only reason he was in the church was to support the efforts of his wife....

"Questioned at length by each member of the Session, however, the differences between the Session and Mr. Ling were not compatible and he was excused...." (Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Session, First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi on March 7, 1967.)

Not noted in these Minutes was the fact that Ed was there accused of fomenting dissention in the church "in the form of a conspiracy." Further, he had explained that, as the Elders well knew, he was virtually dormant in the church and had only been a spokesperson for others. (Shades of Genesis 4:12.)

"Well," one of the Elders replied, "I know Ingrid couldn't have been involved in any of this. She's too sweet." Little did he then know. Ha!

She had been the instigator.

Ed was also asked whether he hadn't come to Mississippi to infiltrate this church, wasn't he an "outside agitator," and did he know certain persons then named. At the latter, he laughed, because they were known, acknowledged communists. All his answers were in the negative.

Five other families were also requested to meet later with the Session, families which, in the Session's words, "have constituted most of the difficulties we are presently having in the church." They were Mr. and Mrs. Coover, Mr. and Mrs. John Landon, Mr. Robert Taylor, and Mr. and Mrs. John Mefford. All did so, Mrs. Taylor accompanying her husband, except for the Meffords, who instead transferred to the Long Beach Presbyterian Church. The Session determined, after these meetings, that only the Ling family was really troublesome and thereafter referred to this as the "Ling Affair."

Some weeks later, therefore, a letter dated March 20, 1967 was received by the Lings. It was addressed to only Ed, but called upon both him and Ingrid to "submit [y]ourselves to the government and discipline of the Church," in writing. Otherwise, penalties would be imposed, which included their excommunication, they were advised.

This they refused to do, in the belief that there were only two persons who dominated the Session and they weren't about to do that which had so arrogantly been demanded, as they saw it. The other men on the Session were good men, simply ill-advised and dominated by the other two, they thought. Withal, they were leaving town and would soon be leaving all this behind them. Let it lay, they thought, no problem for us any more.

However, on their last Sunday in town, when Ed was at the hospital with the couple's youngest daughter, who at the time was thought to be suffering from meningitis (it turning out only to be a massive infection, luckily), this same letter was read to the entire congregation during the church service. Ingrid sat there at the organ with tears in her eyes and with clenched fists as it was read. Not a single member of the choir she had served with so long said good bye to her at the

close of the service, nor did a single member of the congregation. She was heart-broken.

As a result, Ed undertook in a lawyerly fashion to explain and explore with the Presbytery's Commission on the Minister what had transpired. After a series of correspondences, which the local church's ruling body for the most part ignored, years later Ed was advised that the two persons who were the dominant leaders of the ruling body had both resigned their positions, the minister had been reassigned and that steps were being taken to change the bylaws of this church so that the ruling body would be elected for only three-year terms in the future. Astoundingly, he was asked if this met with his approval, to which he responded immediately, affirmatively and with a "Praise the Lord!" He had only been a nominal Christian when this matter had been broached; he had grown much and closer to his Lord in the meantime. He still, nevertheless, had a long, long way to go.

Back in Mississippi, the immediate thought back in 1967 was then to tear down the manse to make room for a new one. To this end, a building committee was formed under the chairmanship of Scotty Thomson. On the committee were Kenneth Teague, John Middleton, Max Dossett, Mrs. Mac Canaga, Mrs. May Coover, John Landon and Camille Schaefer.

Resigning from the Diaconate at about this time were Robert Warner and John McPhail, the latter thought soon to be moving with his family to Florida. The Session thereafter met with the Reverend W.F. Stanway, Chairman of the Commission on the Minister, and, on September 15, 1967, the Reverend Bonner requested that the pastoral relationship between him and the church be dissolved. To be noted was that the church budgets for these two years were $17,852 for 1967 and only $13,711 for the next, reflecting the changing circumstances in and of the church.

Nevertheless, life going on, on April 2nd of the next year, the following young people were received into membership of the church: Donna Kay Sick, Warren LeRoy Sick, John Allen Klock, Elden Michael McLaurin, Joseph William Reid, Melody Ann

Reid, Lowell Forrest Reid, and Melvin Plott Coover. On May 20th, the memberships of Ed and Ingrid Ling were transferred to the Latham Memorial Church in Huntsville, Alabama.

On June 10th, the Reverend Dwyn M. Mounger was called to serve as pastor, beginning his long association with this church. He was installed on the 8th of August, his wife Mrs. Bessie Ingram Mounger and their son Malcom Christian accepted into membership in the church, transferring from Jackson, Mississippi, shortly thereafter.

A courageous pastor, the Reverend Mounger, who was a native of Collins, Mississippi and who had attended the Columbia Theological Seminary, had been one of the state-wide committee of white clergy who had raised over $300,000 to rebuild the black churches which had been fire-bombed by segregationists protesting the civil rights movement. As he would put it, "We raised money to build new churches as fast as the people on the other side decided to burn them. We replaced the frame churches with brick ones. Brick didn't burn as fast as wood." Although severely criticized, Reverend Mounger added, "the important thing was taking a stand --letting people know that all people in Mississippi did not approve of what was going on at the time." Notwithstanding those words, he was also a peacemaker, an outstanding one.

On December 15th, two new Elders, previously elected, were ordained. They were John Landon and Jay Howe. (Jay had been the 197th person to join the church.) New Deacons were also installed: Messrs. Schweizer, Hill and McLaurin.

At the end of this year, there were 108 members on the rolls of the church. Eleven had been added by profession of faith, 15 by certificate, plus there being three losses by death during the year, 20 moved to the inactive roll and six being dismissed to other churches. There were then approximately 50 in Sunday school.

In February of 1969, the Session drove to the Gates' home to bring Mrs. Dottie Gates fully into the fellowship of the church. (She would be the 250th to join.) They also visited Mr. and Mrs. DuPreist, whom illness also was preventing from

attending church regularly. It was also noted in the Session's minutes of that time that Reverend Mounger had chosen to live in the manse and that it had been decided to see about enlarging the fellowship hall, as a result.

The bids for the latter were rejected on June 8, 1969. It was also then noted that there had been a steady decline in offerings, which would continue through 1970. Problems had also arisen in the Diaconate, with Messrs. Schweizer, McLaurin and Warner resigning. This was soon after followed by the additional resignations of Messrs. Taylor and Clark. Moreover, John Landon and his entire family resigned from the church on October 6, 1969. Problems were afoot!

The worst problem of all, though, arose the night of August 17-18, 1969 when Hurricane Camille surged out of the driving rain and hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The surge of water was in excess of 25 feet above normal tide. Moreover, howling, shrieking winds of more than 250 MPH also spread destruction.

This was the most devastating hurricane ever to hit the continental United States. It destroyed some 5,600 homes, with another 12,900 incurring significant damage and 25,000 more sustaining some damage. Sixty thousand families were affected, and 22,000 required recovery assistance. Hundreds perished, including 26 in a single "Hurricane Party" at the Richelieu Apartments in Pass Christian. Three bodies of females were never even identified. The situation was literally indescribable.

Homes, automobiles, furniture, clothing and personal belongings were ruined or lost in the hurricane's high winds and tidal flooding. Among those who lost much if not all were members of this church. The Dossetts' house was gone, so was that of the Schaefers, the Tarletons', too, as well as Dr. and Mrs. Cox's beautiful beachfront property. Eight homes in all were completely gone owned by members of the church and thirty-eight others suffered severe damage. Fifty-four church families, consisting of one hundred and sixty-four persons, were affected by the storm, and most of the officers of the church barely escaped with

their lives. For instance, the Rebouls escaped drowning only by climbing up onto their car and thence onto the roof of their home, and Scottie Thomson pulled his wife Doris to safety up into the attic through a hole he cut in the ceiling during the storm. The courage of such persons was heroic.

Other homes were simply made unlivable by Camille, like that of the Warren Sicks'. Few will ever forget when Warren thereafter was trying to put a new roof on their home but was having problems getting the shingles to lay straight. His wife Agnes looking on said that she'd done enough sewing to know how to straighten things out, so to get her up there and she'd see to that. They pulled her up onto the roof, and this tiny, crippled woman showed those "big," strong men how to keep shingles straight! Yes, that she did!

Some homes were merely filled with water and mud, like the Hills', and many expressed the opinion that the circumstances of the latter were the worst.

The church manse itself came through exceptionally well, except for being crushed in part by a large tree, and a number of refugees "camped" out there for some time until other arrangements could be made. In some cases this was not merely days or weeks, but months. As for the church, the only damage to the structure itself was a window which had to be replaced and a small puncture in another window in the front of the church which is still there today. Also, a large number of shingles were blown from the roof, and many trees were blown down, limbs, branches, leaves everywhere. Debris littered everything. It was an expensive and tiresome matter to restore the church to its proper status.

The Sunday afterwards, church was held as usual, and with an overflowing crowd. The only difference was that most of those attending were wearing cutoffs and/or rags that were worn and covered with mud. As John Hill later would put it, "I was in shorts, splattered from digging mud out of my house, and so were most of the congregation. Except for Norm Renshaw. He was dressed to kill, suit, tie, everything. The only one." But spirits were raised thereby, and they would continue to be,

despite what might have been a mortal blow. Many families had lost nearly everything, some would be forced to leave the area, and those remaining had little funds left over from seeing to their own needs.

Moreover, on September 28, 1969, the Huntsville Times newspaper had broken the story that the Marshall Space Flight Center had recommended to NASA Headquarters that all static testing on Saturn V moon rockets stop within 15 months, which would mean the "mothballing" of the Mississippi Test Facility and the potential closing of the Michoud plant. It was then announced on January 20, 1970 that this would occur.

What a blow! Especially since the Apollo Program was such an unqualified success. Twenty-four Americans had observed the moon at a close distance, twelve had actually walked on its surface, spending 1,600 manhours on the moon and covering 60 miles of its surface. They also took 30,000 photographs and returned with 841 pounds of lunar soil and rock. Notwithstanding, the public's mood was not supportive for this expensive program.

As a result, many more families were, thus, forced to leave the area, either because of their losses from Camille or from losing their jobs. Nevertheless, the concrete slab foundation for an expansion to the church's fellowship hall and to provide additional classrooms had been poured just two days before Camille hit. For many months afterwards, as the historian for this year, Mrs. Clarence A. Evans, put it: "due to discouragement caused by losses to the families of the church (fifteen families had homes destroyed or so badly damaged that they moved from the area entirely), it was uncertain as to whether or not the new building would ever be finished. However, work was resumed about six months later, and all but a few thousand dollars of the cost of the annex had been paid by the time it was ready for use. The building committee was composed of Dr. Walter Russo (chairman); Max Dossett (treasurer); Camille Schaefer, John Middleton and Edward Thomson. Kenneth Teague was the architect (as he was for the Church building also). Memorial gifts had been made to the building fund for the late S.K. Kepner,

Robert Teague, Oliver Ware, O. Duke and Chris Reab, who were also honored in the dedication services. The annex now provides for a larger fellowship hall, four additional church school rooms, two rest rooms, a library and store rooms." The dedication was held at the eleven o'clock service on Sunday, June 7th.

Typical Post-Camille View

Arriving by chartered bus, around 40 young persons, including eight adults, of the Elfinwild United Presbyterian Church of Glenshaw, Pennsylvania visited the church the week of June 13 through the 16th with the express purpose of helping with the labor of repairing the damaged homes and property of church members from Hurricane Camille. They lived sort of "camp-style" in one wing of the church's educational building, and, after their working day was over, they were entertained by various sponsoring groups of the church, e.g., the Women of the Church gave them a Dinner on the Grounds and the young people a swimming party.

This wonderful group of youth led the worship

service the day after they arrived, with special music and the message being brought to the congregation by one of the pastors accompanying the group. They had raised the funds to charter the bus by giving various projects and entertainments in their home town; this was the third of the "work projects" they had undertaken, spending part of the summer helping on an Indian Reservation in Arizona and, in 1988, had had a project in Ozone, Tennessee.

They will never be forgotten by those they helped. They were, however, but one of three groups that came to the Coast specifically to assist the members of the First Presbyterian Church who suffered from Hurricane Camille, one of the groups coming from Colorado and spending most of its time repairing the extensive roof damage that had been suffered at the church. The generosity and compassion shown on all sides was remarkable.

Moreover, air conditioning and a heating system were installed in the manse in early July at the direction of the Deacons. In October, the Presbytery even met at the church for a very successful business session. The Women of the Church saw to it that mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks were served, and there were ladies on hand around the clock to serve hot coffee.

And in late October, a kindergarten at the church was started under the supervision of the Session under the direction of Mrs. Lynn Chunn. (She had transferred here from Huntsville on April 6, 1969.) It was for children in the four to five year age group, with classes being held every morning in the educational wing of the new annex. The kindergarten met a real community need of that time, the Session approving it on September 16, 1970.

The former pastor Reverend Lindsey was seriously ill during most of this year, and, towards the end of it, Mrs. Lindsey also was stricken and had to spend many months in a hospital in New Orleans. At the end of the year, the Session consisted of the Reverend Dwyn M. Mounger, Moderator; T.T. Reboul, Clerk; and Scotty Thomson, Max Dossett, Jay Howe and Dr. Walter Russo. The

Board of Deacons were John McPhail, John Hill, John Middleton and Felder McLaurin. The membership numbered 94 at the end of 1969, and there were 21 additions for the year.

At the end of 1970, the church's total membership, including non-resident and inactive members, was considered to be 140. (On December 6, 1970, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Fisher were taken into the church, the 281st and 282nd members.) There were, however, 14 on the inactive list, 10 more were dismissed, and there were 10 deaths among members. Thus, the church ended the year with 100 members, a net increase of six, the first increase in some time.

It was also during this year, on May 12, 1970, that the Session had advised the Board of Deacons "that anyone of any race, creed or color that wishes to sincerely worship in our church will be seated," thus ending the practice of the so-called "greeters" in the narthex being there to also dissuade persons of the wrong "race, creed or color" from worshiping in the church. It was noted by some that the adverb "sincerely" still gave sufficient leeway to those who might not entirely favor this so-called "change."

In February of 1971, Mr. and Mrs. Orrin H. Pilkey joined the church, at the same time the Session noted that the need for a new organ was becoming critical. Retired Army Brigadeer General and Mrs. Haines also transferred to the church, from Columbus, Ohio. "Howie" and Sue Haines would be gracious and unstinting givers to their newly adopted church and community.

On August 1, 1971, Mrs. Bessie Mounger died. To many, her death was attributable to Hurricane Camille --or its aftermath. So would be the death of Norman Renshaw within another year. Others who also survived the storm, but did not live much longer afterwards were Mrs. Buelah Phillips and her husband Fred.

On November 1, 1971, Fred Fisher, William Haldeman and Orrin Pilkey were elected Deacons, their ordination in two weeks.

In 1972, on January 23rd, the congregation voted to purchase, for additional parking space, the old service station building laying immediately

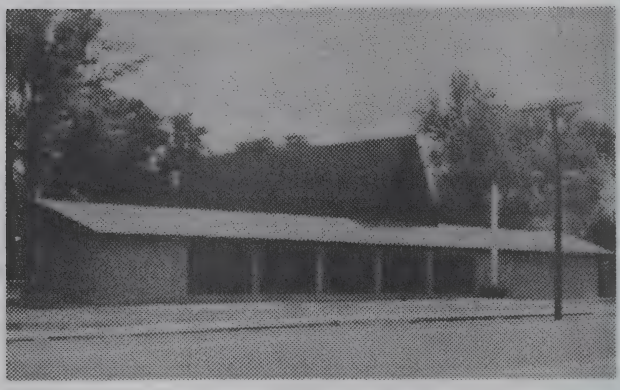
to the east of the existing church property. The price was $4,500, $3,000 of which the church had to borrow.

The manse property which the church had bought on Highland Avenue was thereafter sold to the Schaefers, so that they could rebuild on higher, safer ground.

The church was also leaning toward such ground. It would seek to heal its wounds and those of its congregation, to become a church of reconciliation, not confrontation. It might not always succeed, but it would almost always be trying henceforth....

The Reverend Dwyn & Mrs. Bessie Mounger

The New Church Building & Manse



CHAPTER 5: THE CHANGES

The new pastor, the Reverend Terry Crimm, met with the Session on December 9, 1974. The tall, handsome minister was barely out of seminary, yet he had a presence and a maturity well beyond his years. The Elders he met with were John Middleton, Charles Maumas, Jay Howe (who was also Clerk of the Session), Max Dossett, Neil Jeffrey, Scotty Thomson, John McPhail and Fred Fisher. There were also eight Deacons, John Hill being Treasurer.

Starting the new year, there were 103 persons on the church's rolls and 42 enrolled in Sunday school. The budget for the year was $17,993.40. However, by mid-year, only $10,000 had been pledged, and the bank was still owed $4,000. It was reported that only about one-fourth of the congregation "give regularly."

An every-person canvas was, thus, undertaken, and tithing immediately improved. By the end of the year, $20,302 was collected, but not all benevolences were able to be paid, it was noted.

This year, though, would be a banner one for the church. For one thing, on October 6, 1975, Mr. Joe and Mrs. Vivian Murrow were received into the church by certificate of transfer. This African American family was the first of its race to join the church. It would not be the last, however, and they would add measurably to the growth of the church over the coming years. Joe and Vivian are special joys to this congregation.

An unmatched set, Joe was and remains six foot one inches tall, his pert wife but five foot one. They had transferred their church memberships from

New Rochelle, New York. Retired, Joe was a native of North Carolina and had won Vivian while there. For her part, Vivian was a native of Handsboro, Mississippi. Shortly after moving to Bay St. Louis, both then in their seventies, a neighbor had contacted Mrs. Beth Crimm, who told her pastor husband Terry, who immediately drove to the Murrows' home to invite them to come to the First Presbyterian church, since they were Presbyterians.

"No," Joe replied, "not this Sunday. We'll see you in a week, though." Which they did, and, although not everyone took an immediate liking to them, as a matter of fact some grumbling being heard, soon they were ensconsed in the church. They wouldn't leave, and soon almost everyone <u>loved</u> them. Now <u>everyone</u> does!

The 1976 budget of the church would be $22,917, it was noted. The membership would remain fairly steady at 103, and Bob Cuendet would be elected an Elder, as would a woman to the Diaconate.

There was a Special Easter Service this year, the Jews for Jesus sponsoring an evening program, which was well received, and received into membership of the church on November 14, 1976 would be retired Air Force Colonel Larry and Lucimarian Roberts, along with their beautiful daughter Robin, the second African American family to join. Larry was then employed at the NASA site. "I warned them," feisty Vivian Murrow would relate later, "that not everyone in the church would welcome them. There was some more grumbling; however, most in the church were good Christians." So were the Roberts. Outstanding ones. Gracious, too. Also joining then were Carol Page, Mack McCarty, and June, James and Joel Johnston. Jim Johnston would add his name to the rolls on January 16, 1977.

Further to be noted was the adoption of the rotation system for Elders at a congregational meeting held on November 21, 1976. Henceforth, they would be elected for three-year terms and thereafter be ineligible for re-election, generally speaking, until sitting out one year off the Session. A <u>big</u> step.

Dr. Russo and his family, it is finally to be

noted, transferred to the Gulfport church on December 6, 1976.

The next year was started with a budget of $27,087, and Lucimarian Roberts became the new organist for the church. She played beautifully, as she did everything she undertook. Still does. On July 17, 1977, moreover, Ray and Kay Coleman were received into the fellowship of the church by profession of faith. So were the Hitchcock and Minegar families. All were welcomed.

On November 13th, Mack McCarty, Mark Minegar and Jack Wilbanks were elected Elders in the church. Ray Coleman and Tom Hitchcock were elected to the Board of Deacons, too.

At a congregational meeting on December 10, 1977, Mrs. June Johnston moved, as seconded by Mrs. Marge Hitchcock, that special thanks be voted to Mr. and Mrs. John Hill and to Mrs. John McPhail for their "hard, but much needed work, which benefits us all." Approval thereof was unanimous and heartfelt.

1977 had not been without its problems, on the other hand. In a letter dated October 22, 1977, 13 complaints or grievances were made to the Presbytery's Commission on the Minister concerning the Reverend Terry Crimm. After three and a half years as pastor, he was categorized as "arbitrary, dictatorial, aggressive and extremely judgmental." Some had obviously been wounded deeply. (Shades of the prior charges made against the Session.)

After much discussion, prayer and consultation, a Special Meeting of the Session was held at which the Reverend Robert Wilson, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, served as Moderator. John Hill was spokesman for the seventeen who had brought these charges. They were Mr. and Mrs. John Middleton, Mrs. Francis Voight, Mrs. Hilda Sallinger, Mr. Max Dossett, Mrs. M.C. Irving, Gen. and Mrs. Howard Haines, Mr. and Mrs. John Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Camille Schaefer, Mrs. Una Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Sick, Sr., Mrs. Leona Hughes and Mrs. Marian W. Spillman.

Much discussion ensued, the Session declining to make any decision at this time. The Session, instead, played the roll of peacemaker, admitting to and finding a lack of communication, but noting

that within the past year 25 new, active members had joined the church, there were new ministries initiated, and there was a rise in giving of time and funds by the congregation. Moreover, twenty-two persons in the congregation wrote letters to the Session in support of their minister. They were Wynn Plowden, Doug and Faith Koger, Donna Bowen, Mack, Jeanne and Patty McCarty, Mark and Susan Minegar, Ray and Kay Coleman, Joe and Vivian Murrow, Dotty Gates, Margaret and Tom Hitchcock, Jim, June, Joel and James Johnston, Barbara Kinnebrew, and Jean Montgomery.

The Session also wrote a letter to the congregation announcing plans for improvements which included, among other things, communication, expanded participation by all members, and special efforts to be devoted and undertaken to help the pastor in his work. The majority of the congregation, it was to be noted, had remained neutral in this controversy. This was not uncommon, however. Either in life or in this congregation. There may be deep divisions re some, while most remain undisturbed or ignorant.

1978 started off on a better note, even if the wounds of the prior year had not fully healed. Jack Wilbanks, Mack McCarty and Mark Minegar were ordained and installed as Elders, while Ray Coleman, Tom Hitchock and Jim Johnston were ordained and installed as Deacons. Moreover, Mrs. Florence John transferred her membership to the church by letter of transfer. So did Chris and Vonnie Bodenschatz on April 23rd, except theirs was by profession of faith.

The budget for this year was $26,300. Included in this sum was an organist's salary, with Ingrid Ling taking over these duties on January 9, 1978. (Ingrid always refused the salary, though. Her husband Ed had accepted the job of Chief Counsel or Chief Legal Officer back at the newly renamed space installation: the National Space Technology Laboratories. Later it would become the John C. Stennis Space Center.) Lucimarian Roberts was thanked by the Session, by letter, for her contributions in this area. She deserved it, gracious lady.

The movers were still unloading the Ling's

moving van and a telephone had only been installed ten minutes earlier, upon the return of the Lings to Waveland, when the Reverend Terry Crimm called to invite them back to "their" church. He eventually overcame the Lings' hesitation, and they were met with open love and forgiveness. On both sides. Their oldest, Lori, joined, a year later.

On March 13th, the time for Sunday school was changed so as to permit coffee and fellowship at its end and before church began. It was also noted in the Minutes of the Session Meeting that night, "Tithing has increased every month of 1978. The increase started in December of last year."

At a congregational meeting on April 2nd, a part-time secretary for the pastor was even approved in recognition of the increased workload, not to exceed 20 hours per week, and, at a Joint Session-Diaconate meeting on April 8th, it was determined that "Outreach goals of the church are in a state of transition. The present budget and previous ones reflect a dead church. The previous budgets have been of a defensive nature because the church was developing. It shows slow growth and more maturity now. Benevolences could be increased, but they could also still be specific."

However, the pastor had been severely wounded earlier, as noted above, and he had been offered a job to teach that he was tempted by. This possibility loomed high, and on May 21, 1978 it became a reality. Terry Crimm's ministerial relationship was dissolved as of that date, Terry having been called to the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Jackson to teach the Old Testament, beginning May 28, 1978.

At this same time, Evelyn McPhail was elected to the Diaconate, and a pulpit nominating committee was elected by the congregation, consisting of John Hill, Neil Jeffrey, June Johnston, Tom Hitchcock, Patty McCarty, Nancy Little and Jack Wilbanks. Rodger and Kristin Ling would join the church, too.

This was the year, also, when the Ocean Springs church began to request the return of the pews it had loaned this church; Sue Haines was the chairperson of the Kindergarten Board of Directors; Max Dossett and Fred Fisher were elected to become Elders; and Ben Watrous and Billy Power were

elected Deacons.

The Reverend Dwyn Mounger was requested to and served as an Interim Pastor, beginning in September, with the Reverend John F. Foy of Fayetteville, North Carolina being called to become the pastor at a congregational meeting held November 19th, to be effective January 1, 1979. The vote was 37 for, three against and two abstentions. Neil Jeffrey also moved that the Reverend Dwyn Mounger be designated Pastor Emeritus, which motion unanimously passed.

Many changes had been effected during these years. More would be required in the future. First, though, would come the doldrums, an interim for the church, a time for some more healing to come about, divisions, rifts and problems to be set aside in favor of others to come, newly arising. Compromises would be in order, or so it would seem. Definitely in order. They would even become the norm for this church. But not at first.

Vivian Murrow, Rev. Terry Crimm & Joe Murrow

CHAPTER 6: THE TRANSITION

Although it had looked bleak for some time, other Federal agencies and departments with compatible interests were invited and accepted the invitation of NASA to relocate to the National Space Technology Laboratories. Moreover, NASA determined that the Space Shuttle Main Engines would be static tested there and the Space Shuttle External Tanks would be manufactured at the Michoud plant. These announcements rejuvenated spirits which had been sagging, and efforts continued to obtain other Federal and State relocations to this installation, with aperiodic releases of the successes achieved, such as with the U.S. Navy.

Families even began to locate or relocate to this area. As has been noted, the Ling family was one that had soon returned to the Bay area, as did the McPhails, while the Johnston and Roberts families moved here, too. As did the Covodes, Schroeders, Plowdens and Montgomeries, albeit Scotty Thomson would suffer ill-health and be relocated to Houston, Texas by his sons. Others had relocated only as far as required to obtain other employment, like Mac Canaga, who found an excellent position with Ingalls, as did a number of the aerospace engineers and administrators brought to this area by the space program.

The year began with the so-called "coffee and fellowship" hour on Sunday morning being discontinued --for lack of interest again. Also, in March, the pastor's office was relocated from behind the sanctuary to its present location, which, up to then, had been an adult classroom. This was also the year in which Colonel-Chaplain Jerry R. Rice of the Keesler Air Force Base first "filled in" for the minister. He would later do so

on a sustaining basis.

In 1980, the Elders were Fred Fisher, Neil Jeffrey, Jim Johnston, Max Dossett, Jack Wilbanks and Mack McCarty; the Diaconate had Larry Roberts, George Schroeder, Joe Murrow, Billy Power and Richard Campbell on it. The Kindergarten Board consisted of General and Mrs. Howard Haines, Betty Jeffrey, Mary Autenwreath, Glenda Campbell, Linda Wagner, John Middleton, Shirley Necaise and Francis Voight.

The kindergarten had been growing, and the church had been meeting a vital community need thereby. At this time, it had a budget of nearly $12,500 and was supporting 27 students. (The kindergarten reimbursed the church for utilities and telephone service.) Within two years, on the other hand, General Haines would replace John Middleton as Treasurer, and, on December 23, 1983, General Haines would pass on to his Maker. Gracious Mrs. Sue Haines would, further, within a few years move to Williamsburg, Virginia to be closer to her son and his family. Both General and Sue Haines had given generously of their time, effort and funds to support this activity and their church, inter alia.

Notwithstanding, the kindergarten would, just before this, now in competition with Mississippi-sponsored kindergartens in the public schools, cease to operate. Some problems had arisen, too, with accounting, the IRS and, it was noted by the Session, there had not been any children in it from our church for some time. Therefore, the Session voted that this outreach of the church should be discontinued as no longer meeting a need of the community. And it soon was.

The church's budget for this year was $36,000. Further, after much vitriolic discussion and debate, it had finally been determined to order cushions for the church pews. The adult Sunday school class had offered to pay for the expense thereof not paid for from Memorials; Joe Murrow had pushed for this, just as he later did for an air conditioner-heater for the choir room. He even paid for the latter.

On June 22, 1980, at a Session meeting, the unicameral form of organization was first

discussed. Eventually, it would be adopted.

The following year would find things going fairly smoothly. A budget of $39,800 had been ascribed to, and the last of the "loaned" benches had been returned to the Ocean Springs church. In addition, Kay Covode would ascend to the Diaconate.

On February 15th, Guston and Marian Rapp transferred to the church from Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Gus was a retired chemist and professor at a prestigous midwestern university (Loyola); they would immediately begin to make their presences felt, not merely with their wry humor, but with delightful and insightful intelligence, as well. Although his body might be bound to a wheelchair, Gus's mind and spirit soared!

Shortly thereafter, on May 11th, Pastor Foy announced that he desired to terminate his relationship with the church effective June 7, 1981. He would be the first short-termer. More healing was obviously in order; however, it would be slow in coming. Withal, a pulpit committee was then elected from the congregation, consisting of Jim Johnston, Charles Maumas, Kay Covode, George Schroeder and Christal Schaefer. They immediately began their search for a replacement.

It was with sadness that it was announced after this that Elder Bob Cuendet had died. However, an informal agreement with Chaplain Rice to preach on a sustaining basis three Sundays a month was a cheerful note. As was the acceptance into the church on December 6, 1981 of Billy and David Cox. Also just before the end of the year, at a congregational meeting, another budget for the next year of an equal amount as the previous one ($39,800) was agreed upon and Tom Hitchcock and John Cavode were elected Elders, with Paul Smith and Kay Coleman being elected Deacons. Fred Fisher and Marge Hitchcock were also elected to the pulpit nominating committee.

The next year saw the irrepressible Vonnie Bodenschatz being elected a Deacon. Further, the Reverend William Warner Ford was called to be the pastor at a congregational meeting held on March 28, 1982. On December 12, 1982, Marian Englehorn was accepted into the church.

In 1983, the congregation elected to have

communion monthly, for the first time, and determined, furthermore, that it preferred to take the elements together, thus putting another divisive problem to rest, according to Minutes of the Session dated February 6th. Betty and Orrin Pilkey also transferred their membership to a Charlottesville, Virginia church then. Orrin was a scholar and author who would be missed.

Total expenditures for the year were $34,439.40. At the end of it, there were 79 members on the church rolls, one less than had started the year. Also of note was the fact that there were now six men and three women in the Diaconate. There were, however, only 16 students in Sunday school. These numbers would soon change, becoming larger in all respects.

In 1984, Larry Roberts would be elected to the Council of the South Mississippi Presbytery, a very high honor. Moreover, on February 12th, the congregation voted to exempt itself from the provisions of G-8.05012 and G-8.0502 of the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which the congregation had previously voted to remain in, when the so-called "Northern" and "Southern" Presbyterian denominations had joined together. These provisions deal with selling, encumbering and/or leasing the property of the church. Title was retained to the church property; otherwise, it would have been transferred to the national denomination in effect.

At another congregational meeting, this one on August 12, 1984, the members agreed to a sale of the manse for $90,000. It was agreed that these funds would be invested and the interest paid or used for payment of a housing allowance to future ministers in lieu of a manse.

The Session also voted on November 4, 1984 to recommend to the congregation that it change the form of government of the church to the unicameral system. John Covode reported on the benefits to be achieved, George Schroeder moved and Gus Rapp seconded that our church so move. Under this system, there would only be a unicameral Board of Elders or the Session, no Deacons, in accordance with Section G-6.0407 of the Book of Order, the functions of the Diaconate being transferred to the

Session. This was approved at a congregational meeting on November 11, 1984.

On December 16th, Joe Murrow and Alice Hondzinski were elected Elders. During the year, there had been no members who had joined the church, and there had been two losses. The year, therefore, ended with there being 77 persons on the membership roll, of whom 45 were females. There were now 45 students in Sunday school, though.

Scotty Thomson was elected an Elder Emeritus or an Honorary Elder on January 6, 1985. Pastor Ford was ill, and Pastor Emeritus Dwyn Mounger was authorized by the Presbytery to serve as Moderator during the long illness which would follow.

According to the Minutes of the Session for January 20, 1985, there were then three active Elders: Neil Jeffrey, Larry Roberts and Fred Fisher. There were also two inactive ones, John Covode and Alice Hondzinski, the latter to be installed and returned to active status that day. There were also three to be ordained and installed that day: Vonnie Bodenschatz, Mrs. John (Pamela) Quinn and George Schroeder.

In September, it was determined that Pastor Ford would resign in November and become a disability plan annuitant. The church continued to pay his salary, moving and incidental expenses for some months, though.

The Reverend Mounger thereafter again began serving as an Interim Pastor, until a nominating committee elected on November 11, 1985 could conduct its business. Those on this committee were Lilla Adams, Vonnie Bodenschatz, Eleanor Hill, Alice Hondzinski, Neil Jeffrey, Ray Coleman and Vivian Murrow. Alice was elected chairperson by the committee.

On December 3, 1985, John Hill was elected an Elder, and on December 15th Marjorie Leech and Eddie Englehorn became church members. The church's budget for 1985 had been $42,000; for 1986, it would be only $37,000. Things were not looking up in these trying times. Moreover, stalwarts Mr. and Mrs. George Schroeder would be transferring to a church in Cocoa Beach, Florida, where George had been transferred. Incidently, in late 1991, they would return for a visit, after George's

retirement. They were driving a beautiful, modern mobile home. It was really good to see them. This was the year (1986), it is to be noted, when a new concrete ramp for the disabled was built easing access for persons of Gus Rapp's ilk. A new vacuum cleaner was also purchased by the Women of the Church. Moreover, on March 30th, Miss Niccole Bodenshatz and Mr. F. Cliff Ling became members of the church. And the Johnston family, along with Alice Hondzinski, would reinstitute a monthly family dinner, usually immediately after church service, which practice continues today.

On August 10th, there was the dedication of the parking lot honoring the deceased Mrs. Bessie I. Mounger, who had been sadly missed. The plaque may now be seen in the narthex of the church, and it reads: "This parking lot is dedicated in loving memory to Bessie Ingram Mounger, 1909 - 1971, Mistress of the Manse, 1968-1971."

It was thereafter noted in a Session meeting that the Presbytery's records had the church membership at 83, whereas in reality there were only 65. It was also reported that the nominating committee had processed over 30 applications so far --and was still looking. Furthermore, Vonnie Bodenschatz and Ingrid Ling were appointed to be in charge of a church newsletter on October 3rd, while on November 6th Kathy Cox Wally was received into the church (having two children: Sara and Andrew), and, at a congregational meeting on November 23rd, the Reverend Mounger presented a petition entitled "A World-Wide Grass Roots Crusade for Peace." The Session had already endorsed this, and the congregation and Presbytery soon followed suit.

Eventually, the World-Wide Grass Roots Peace Crusade would be incorporated as a Mississippi non-profit corporation, and it would attain tax-free status with the IRS. On its Board of Directors would be its founder; his older son who was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Valdosta, Georgia; John Hill, the Manager of NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility; William Oglesby of Channel 4 in New Orleans; Dr. Gus Rapp; Alice Hondzinski, Secretary-Treasurer; Larry Roberts, Vice President; and Ed Ling, President. Dwyn and Ed would later lead seventeen Belhaven College

students and three of their professors on a peace crusade to China, singing peace songs in Tiananmen Square and visiting Hong Kong, Beijing and Nanjing. Dwyn would underwrite much of the cost thereof, although Ed would pay his own way.

At a congregational meeting on December 21, 1986, Larry Roberts was re-elected an Elder and Ed Ling was elected one. Some divisions, at least, were now healed. Or healing.

On January 4, 1987, Ed Ling took charge, as an Elder, of the Education Committee for the church, and Larry Roberts assumed the duty of heading the Worship Committee. Ed also prepared the papers to incorporate the church as a non-profit corporation, the Session becoming the Board of Directors, as recommended by the Book of Order. Ed was also soon elected to replace Ray Coleman, who had had to resign from the pastoral nominating committee because of his ill-health.

This was, of course, the year that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) met in Biloxi, Mississippi. As the Sunday Church Bulletin for May 31, 1987 put it: "Some who have important responsibilities [at the General Assembly] from our congregation are Lucimarian Roberts, Chairing Logistics, and Alice Hondzinski, Chairperson for Visitor Packets. A number of our people will help in the Communion Service on Tuesday, June 9th, attended by possibly 4,000 people.... Also, the second shift team to Welcome at the Airport next Sunday night 6-10 P.M. is Chris and Vonnie Bodenschatz, co-captains, Max and Faye Dossett, John & Eleanor Hill, and Susie Haines. Our Pastor is Chairman of the Airport Welcoming Committee." The choir also sang in a massed chorus. All muchly enjoyed this experience.

In addition, Alice Hondzinski took the opportunity to make it known that the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis was there actively looking for a new pastor. One who responded to her call was the Reverend J. Richard Jones, a transplanted Pennsylvanian and graduate of Dubuque Theological Seminary, who was then ministering at two small churches in Louisiana. Although relatively small of stature, the Reverend Richard Jones had the same humongous heart and

intellect as the Reverend Mounger. Neither lacked what it took. Again, the Lord brought the right pastor to this church at the right time. In His time. Or so it has appeared.

With one abstention, the pulpit nominating committee recommended Richard Jones to the congregation, even though Richard was a known "charismatic," one who, inter alia, spoke in tongues. When the matter was put to the congregation, only a few spoke in opposition re to the effect that charismatic preachers almost always cause problems and divisions within churches. "We've had enough division in this church," was the closing argument. Which was true.

At this point, shy, retiring, beloved organist-choir director Ingrid Ling got to her feet and advised the congregation, in a hushed voice barely audible and with tears in her eyes, that she, too, spoke in tongues and urged them to vote favorably for this minister. "I've never caused any division in the church, have I?" she inquired in a whisper, forgetting for the moment that, yes, once she actually had. Lucimarian Roberts then stood and echoed this statement, relating to the congregation the humorous story of how she had acquired the gift of tongues. She was followed by Vonnie Bodenschatz, who admitted that she, also, spoke in tongues. Another woman added that she once had had this gift, but had lost it; she wanted it back, she said. Others followed, including Ed and Cliff Ling, all amazed at the "closet charismatics" who were speaking up. Few had known that many of the others had such beliefs and gifts. The discussion was ended when Gus Rapp asked why we were so egotistical as to think that God only accepted prayers in English.

The motion to call Richard Jones was passed with less than a hand-full of dissenting votes. They later agreed to give him a chance, being true spirit-filled Christians. They have not regretted it. None of us have. Praise God!

The times, they surely were a-changin'.

CHAPTER 7: THE NEW BEGINNING

A Service of Installation for the Reverend J. Richard Jones as Minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis by the Presbytery of Mississippi was held on Sunday, December 6, 1987 at four o'clock in the afternoon. The members of the Commission were Mrs. Stella Hemphill, Moderator of the Commission and Chairperson of the Presbytery's Committee on the Ministry. She was also an Elder in the Westminister Presbyterian Church in Gulfport. Others were Mr. William Trest, an Elder in the Pineville Church in Pass Christian; Mr. Joseph J. Finely, an Elder in the Community Church at Diamondhead; Mrs. Alice Hondzinski, Elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis; the Reverend Dwyn Mounger, Interim Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church; the Reverend Charles E. Holland, Minister of the Long Beach Presbyterian Church; the Reverend Amos A. Hood, Designated Pastor of the Orange Grove Mission; and the Reverend James R. Hardy, Jr., Minister of the Wiggins Presbyterian Church.

Ingrid Ling played the organ, the choir sang, and refreshments were served in the fellowship hall immediately following the service. The moment was moving. So was time.

Thereafter, divisions would be a thing of the past --forgotten and forgiven. In part, it was the maturity of the congregation, in part the leading of the shepherd. In largest measure, though, it was because of the guidance and healing of the Holy Spirit. For instance, a very divisive issue was faced in the congregation very early in the 1990's: casino gambling. It had been voted in by the

voters of Hancock County by a very narrow margin, and it was an issue that deeply divided the community. The church body was also divided, and, although there might have been a minor incident or two, those on both sides generally kept their opinions on this issue mostly to themselves among themselves and did not try, unduly, to sway others in the flock, i.e., it being agreed that these issues need not be determined in the church, that Christians might disagree and agree to disagree on some such matters.

Similar "peacemaking" occurred when noses got out of joint on other occasions, such as when to take the elements in communion (yes, arising again), and concerning renovating and/or changing functions of rooms, etc., etc., etc. Such invariably will, do and did occur, any wounds being healed fairly quickly. Both sides were now much more tolerant and willing to compromise, to heal rifts and bind up wounds, even if in the beginning there were some aggressive words spoken because heart-felt. That is to say, gentleness followed bellicosity. There was also a lot less hyberbole.

As a result, it being unified, not riven, growth in the church would be phenomenal. If not in numbers, in growth substantively toward God and His Son, our Lord, as well as toward the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, it is to be noted, this is what God intends all the time --not growth in numbers but in substance. To this end, Thursday night Bible Studies were initiated, and those attending these classes, taught by the Reverend Richard Jones, found them most interesting and insightful. The introduction of praise songs, led by Alice Jones on the autoharp, at these sessions was a delightful variation, too. Alice Jones, a native of South Dakota where she had met her husband at Huron College which they both were attending, was herself a charming addition to the church. She added immeasurably and greatly. In all ways.

The next year, however, another such, the beloved Ingrid Ling, would be lost to her family and congregation. In a twinkling, without warning, on the night of December 12, 1988, she went to be with her Lord and Master --a terrible loss. Yet, at her memorial service in the church, which was

filled to overflowing, many having to listen to the service from outside the building, the high point came when the members of the congregation, and other friends, spontaneously volunteered the joys that Ingrid had brought to their lives. The service closed with a tape recording of one of Ingrid's original songs being played. Ingrid was singing. It was a quite moving tribute.

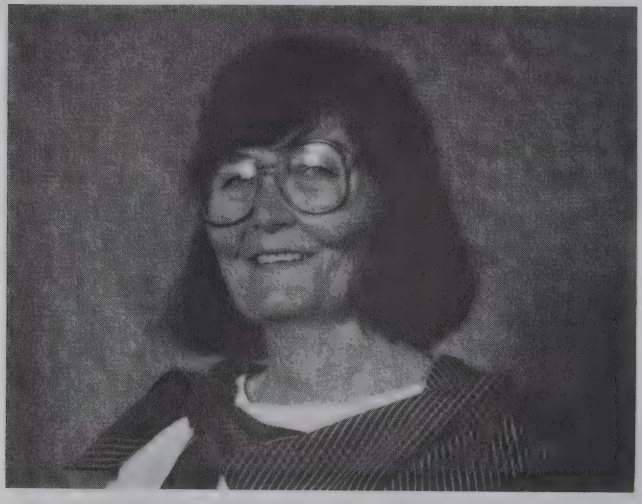
As was the nearly $2,000 donated in her name to the Organ Fund. Ingrid's beloved Wurlitzer piano was also donated to the church, resting now in the sanctuary with a plaque on it which reads:

Dedicated in Loving Memory
to
Ingrid June Hilke Ling
June 6, 1932 - December 12, 1988
Beloved Child of God,
Mother, Wife, Friend, Teacher
Choir Director and Organist.

Ingrid June Hilke Ling

At first, Kathy Wally served as an Interim Choir Director, while Alana Noonan filled in ably at the organ. Later, Alice Jones would be appointed Choir Director by the Session, and she has done a yeoman's job since. She is quite talented, and the choir deserves her.

Another person who would be mightily missed, another stalwart, one who never flinched at volunteering, was Mrs. Betty Crockett. A retired school teacher, Betty served in the choir, taught Sunday school, and brought donuts to the fellowship hall every Sunday morning for years. She had even served as the director of Vacation Bible School before her death, and the next year she was the honorary director. Moreover, the revival at the church, known as "Spirit Alive," which was held in 1991 was dedicated to her memory: "To BETTY CROCKETT who loved us, blessed us, laughed with us and prayed for this mission. Gone to be with our Lord: September 16, 1991."



Betty Crockett

New blood, on the other hand, was pouring into the church. Fred Alfred, Alice and Tim Jones, Mrs. Mabel Tryon, Miss Betty Ashe, Mrs. Sue Winter and her daughter Magan, Bob and Charlene Bergman, along with their children Drew, Cori and Katie, Mrs. Helen Cazaubon, Dan and Ellie D'Antoni, Wade and Karen Long, Joy Russell and her children Timothy, Sara and Robert, Bob and Jean Barrett, Lex Mauffray, his sons Jason and Trey, Mrs. Juel Gabe, Mike Manley, his son Michael, Joe Perniciaro, Ed and Sylvia Young, and Mrs. Tina Thompson, who for some time served as organist, doing a simply superb job, until moving with her husband to the Carribbean in early 1992. Alana Noonan Meadow would then take over the organist's duties again.

Ed Young owns a used furniture store in New Orleans and his wife a clothing store or dress shop, a unique one. They have since opened a similar dress shop in Bay St. Louis, their presence immediately being felt. It may be noted, on the other hand, that none of the new blood in the church has belonged to a minority of late.

New blood was infused into the Session. Bob Bergman, Bob Riddle, Mrs. Kathy Mauffray nee Cox/Wally, Mrs. Sue Ling nee Menard/Winter, Joe Perniciaro, Mrs. Sylvia Young, Mrs. Kay Covode, and Miss Betty Ashe joined this body, which already included, at various times, Alice Hondzinski, Vonnie Bodenshatz, Ray Coleman, Jim Johnston, John Covode, John Hill, Ed Ling, Larry and Lucimarian Roberts, and Dr. Steve Southern.

Following in the footsteps of the impish Reverend Dwyn Mounger, he with the twinkling eyes who had married the even more impish widow Christine Renshaw on June 11, 1972, Ed Ling married Sue Winter some years later. They eloped in 1989 to Las Vegas, calling Vonnie Bodenschatz from the airport to advise her thereof and where to find a triangle which Sue was scheduled to play in the choir's anthem that Sunday. Other weddings of note include between Sue Hanisee and James Johnston, Jr.; Kathy Wally and Lex Mauffray; Dan Jones and Cindy Harris; Carol Snyder and Mike Manley; and the Lings and the Smiths and Burnhams. Baptisms would include Charles Southern, Gabriel Ling, Richard Mauffray and Helen Hall's grandaughter.

The Sunday school would also blossom. Teaching the children would be, e.g., Jackie Riddle, Sylvia Young, Teresa Perniciaro, Kathy and Lex Maufray, Penny Rodriguez, Sharon Loiacano, Warren Sick, Jr., Vonnie Bodenschatz and Betty Ashe. Teaching the adults would be the Eds Ling and Young, with Dr. Steve Southern, Larry Roberts, Gus Rapp and Jim Johnston filling in as substitutes whenever needed. Vacation Bible School would also grow, and especially remembered is the dance that Sharon Loiacano taught the kids, as are the photographs her husband Jimmy took of the congregation in 1991.

The fellowship time on Sundays would be lengthened, and the choir would also grow,

consisting of June Johnston, Christal Schaefer, Vonnie Bodenschatz, the Warren Sicks, both Jr. and Sr., Ed Young, Dwyn Mounger and Larry Magruder. Sue Ling, Kay Covode and Kathy Mauffray also sing when they can. Ed Ling did for a short while, as did Bob and Charlene Bergman.

A building committee also strove mightily during this period. Chaired by Jim Johnston, it had Bob Bergman, Mike Manley, Sue Ling and Jackie Riddle on it. Unfortunately, it was unable to reach even a consensus on plans to expand the fellowship hall's usefulness, and the matter had to be settled by the Session, which voted to remodel and renovate but not expand the walls; however, the bid therefor was too outrageously high, and so the matter was dropped.

Instead, individuals began to do their own renovating and remodeling. First, Mike Manley and Ed Ling tore out the old restroom and the walls in the rooms behind the sanctuary, i.e., what had originally been the pastor's study and the choir robe room. Then Ed and Sue Ling redecorated this space, including sound-deadening, to make it into a new choir room. That may have been the beginning, but it was only that. In addition, Jackie and Bob Riddle, Donna Southern and Eleanor Hill undertook a complete redecorating and renovation of the nursery, while Richard and his son Tim Jones assisted in the painting. Richard also assisted Bob Riddle in the repainting of the hallway in the fellowship hall, while Alice Hondzinski undertook to repaint, redecorate and renovate the "old" choir room, then being used by the adult Sunday school class. Harold Eddins did the same for the up-to-then un- or under-used classroom between this room and the pastor's study, as well as doing whatever, wherever and whenever. Moreover, Carol and Mike Manley painted the pastor's study, Bob Barrett the bookshelves, and the Women of the Church donated a copy machine. Further, a new and larger refrigerator for the kitchen arrived via the Hondzinskis, and Christal Schaefer donated paraments or altar cloths, in honor of her deceased husband Camille. (Jim and June Johnston have promised to keep the latter current with the church's seasons.) Somewhere

along the line, too, the leaky roof was repaired, and more and more remodeling, redecorating and painting, general and specific fixing up, seems to be undertaken all the time. With the concurrence or approval of the Session, of course.

The church's budget has also been increasing each year. In 1988 it was $38,700, with 66 members on the rolls. At the end of 1991, there were 74 active members, 20 on the inactive list, with 46 families living in Bay St. Louis and Waveland, while 15 more lived in Pass Christian and four in Diamondhead, others in scattered areas. The church took in $60,523.57 this last year, which was less than its expenses of $69,390.30, not taking into account the interest on the $123,103.55 invested, of which $3,059.76 was in an Organ Fund and another $11,231.55 in a Building Fund. There was also nearly $6,000 in the checking account at the end of the year. The budget had been for only $57,869. The treasurer, for years, has been Eleanor Hill.

With the Women of the Church once again in a single circle, membership in the church has not shown as decided a growth in numbers (55 being the average attendance on a Sunday), but it has in friendship, fellowship and in growth as Christians. This is indicated by the benevolences of the church growing each year, one year donating an additional $3,000 to the Orange Grove Presbyterian Mission and another $3,000 the next to an outreach project that the Lord put on Jackie Riddle to initiate. In this, needed financial assistance is provided to women who want to undertake academic studies or classes to become self-sufficient: the PEACE-Miss. Dwyn Mounger's Peace Crusade was another of many examples.

As was the beginning of a new Youth Ministry by Charlene and Bob Bergman, a couple which is simply filled with Christian love, assisted by Alice Hondzinski, another who does not hesitate to undertake whatever appears to be needed. This Ministry is called the Seaside Christian Youth Club, and its phenomenal growth is a further example. There are 10 to 15 children at each meeting, and they have undertaken a number of projects, including singing songs at the Reed Hotel Nursing Home and the recycling of aluminum and

newsprint (which Mrs. Juel Gabe supports in her spare time, with her pickup truck), as well as a rummage sale each year, to support themselves and to pay for camp each summer for all who desire to attend. These bright faces and young thoughts are cheerful reminders. Unfortunately, the Bergmans would follow their jobs to Texas in 1992. They would be sorely missed.

Also to be noted is the fact that the church now has many "friends," of whom the Reverend Dwyn Mounger is one of the best. During this period of time, in celebration of his 60 years in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), he was honored by the Presbytery of Mississippi at its meeting on July 25, 1991. All 60 years of his ministry have been in Mississippi, except for three years as a military chaplain. "A Resolution to Honor Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger" was presented by the Council Moderator, Mrs. Stella Hemphill, and unanimously adopted, with congratulations being offered by his friends and family members. The Reverend Joseph B. Righmyer thereafter led the Presbytery in a special prayer of thanksgiving for the life and work of Reverend Mounger.

Other long-time friends are and remain Mr. Warren and Mrs. Agnes Sick. In 1991, however, they opted to become members of the congregation after nearly 30 years of remaining only "friends." At this time, the church has a great number of such friends, who are very active, even hold offices in church organizations, yet for one reason or another have chosen not to "officially" join. Yet....

Probably the best, though, was the Spirit Alive held November 9th through the 12th in 1991. Ed Ling had become associated with this congregational renewal mission of the Presbyterian and Reformed Renewal Ministries, International (PRRMI) and had been a team member on such renewals in Oklahoma and Alaska. After his remarriage, he and Sue became team members on renewal missions in Oklahoma, California (twice), Ohio, Illinois, and New York. Deeply blessed thereby, they finally asked the Session of their church to sponsor one, which the Session granted.

Spirit Alive is a flexible, on-location

spiritual renewal mission, the original concept for which came as an inspiration through an anonymous Presbyterian Elder from Clearwater, Florida who provided the initial funding to develop a multi-year program. It is the only such program in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The PRRMI endorsed the concept and started the Spirit Alive mission in 1983. The first year is generally centered around the theme that "Jesus is Lord," the second usually is on "Healing," the third on the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit," although variations are not uncommon. A fourth year has been developed at the request of congregations that have already experienced the first three years of Spirit Alive. And the four days of such a mission, which is a precious and expensive gift of the PRRMI to a local church, provide a variety of formats for learning, praising, singing, sharing and, above all, growing in the Love of the Lord. Its purpose is to facilitate spiritual renewal and growth of the local congregation as a community of faith.

So it was to be here. The Visiting Team was headed by PRRMI's National Coordinator, the Reverend R. Carter Blaisdell; the Preacher was the dynamic Reverend Jim Logan of the South Tryon Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina; the talented Worship Leaders Paul and Jim Lapeyre of New Orleans; Jean Schroeder or the great "Raggedy Butterfly" taught Grades 4 plus; and the teachers for ages 3 through Grade 3 were Cal and Karen Smith of Waveland, who had a precious, previous association with the church which they shared. Other team members were the gentle teacher and Reverend Andy Buchanan, Jim and Evelyn Monroe, John and Nancy Newton, and Ray and Kelly Oehrle. They came from six states, and they were simply beautiful, blessed and blessing. Not enough can be said about them. All were truly led by the Holy Spirit and were responsive to Him.

The Host Lay Coordinators, of course, were Ed and Sue Ling, and on the Spirit Alive Team were the Women's Circle, Bea Eddins, President, in charge of Prayer; Helen Cazaubon, Welcome & Transportation; Housing by Mike and Carol Manley; Correspondence, Gus and Marian Rapp; providing delicious, wholesome memorable meals were June and Jim Johnston, with

Juel Gabe helping; in charge of coffees and teas was Kathy Mauffray; Visitation, Ray and Kay Coleman; Small Groups, Alice Hondzinski; Luncheons, Susan and Conrad Howe; Taping, Chris Bodenschatz and Warren Sick, Jr.; Literature, Donna and Steve Southern; Attendance, Vonnie Bodenschatz; Publicity, Jackie and Bob Riddle; Nursery, John and Kay Covode; Children and Youth, Charlene and Bob Bergman; Music, Alice Jones and Tina Thompson; and Finance, Agnes and Warren Sick, Sr. As is obvious, the church hosted a great team on its part, too, one that was led by the Holy Spirit and responsive to Him.

The Visiting Spirit Alive Team

The Spirit Alive I held was such a blessing to this church, e.g., lives being changed, healings (both inner and physical) occurring, that the church voluntarily paid all its expenses and those of the Visiting Team, as well. As the Reverend Richard Jones would write: "Spirit Alive was the best thing that I've seen in my 25 years of ministry." The Session also determined to have another Spirit Alive on "The Work and Person of the Holy Spirit" the following year, which the congregation awaits eagerly.

Chris & Dwyn Mounger **Richard & Alice Jones**

In this regard, some of the younger persons who had spent years in this church now found themselves maturing --and even retiring. Among these was John Hill, who headed the Michoud Plant in New Orleans when he did, and Ed Ling, who had gone from Chief Counsel of the Mississippi space center (and previously Michoud's) to Executive Director of the Mississippi Governor's Office of Administration, also authoring four non-fiction books. So, also, with Jim Johnston from the Navy and Chris Bodenschatz and Mike Manley from the SeaBees, Jim first resurrecting the Men of the Church organization, serving as its President and, later, as the leader of all the Presbyterian Church men's organizations along the Gulf Coast. Another well-known NASA retiree is Edward Snow and his wife Ida Mae, who now reside in Diamondhead.

For his part, Richard Jones became a facilitator for all the Presbyterian churches along the coast, working for the Presbytery and doing a fine job, while Larry Roberts has been elected to the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church. His wife, Lucimarian, among other civic duties, serves on the State Board of Education, appointed by the Governor, as well as chairing the Coliseum Board of Directors. Moreover, Kay Covode

is the Librarian of Pass Christian and Bob Riddle the Harbor Master there. Mac Canaga is the personnel director for the Ingalls Shipyards in Pascagoula, and Evelyn McPhail is the top Republican woman in this State as well as being a National Committeewoman. Also to be noted are Dwyn Mounger's Peace Crusade and his lonely campaign against the "beat system" for county government, which later became a steamroller. We now have a unified system in Hancock County as a result. First-class doctors, lawyers, professionals of all types, including teachers and nurses, businessmen, have all been attracted to this church. Or God attracted them to the church. This one.

From the foregoing, it would appear that, for a church of its size and location, the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi has had an undue influence on the secular world in which we live, not to mention the religious one. Such may have been expected from it, may even have surprised some, at least initially, but much, much more is now expected of it in and for the future. Its prospects are great and not to be denied. So, also, are its opportunities. And its challenges.

During its brief history, this church has seen mankind expand its knowledge beyond any reasonable expectation and it has participated in the exploration of the moon --and beyond. This church's eyes, though, have never been merely on the stars, but on its God. That is why it is as it is. Why it is here.

Yes, the future looks very bright. What the next thirty-five years may bring should be fantastic, there is no question. If the past of this little church is any precursor. And it is.

CHAPTER 8: THE LEADERS

During its entire history, the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi has had only eight pastors. They are:

Edward A. Morren: March 31, 1957 - October 1, 1959
Edward A. Lindsey: October 1, 1959-December 1, 1966
Malcom A. Bonner: December 11, 1966-Sep. 15, 1967
Dwyn M. Mounger: Sep. 8, 1968-February 18, 1973*
Terry Crimm: January 1975 - May 28, 1978
John Foy: January 1, 1979 - May 10, 1981
William W. Ford: June 27, 1982 - November 15, 1985
J. Richard Jones: December 6, 1987 to the present.

Moreover, the following men and women have served this church as Elders: Carl Anderson, Betty Ashe, Bob Bergman, Vonnie Bodenschatz, Edward Calvin, Mac Canaga, Bob Cuendet, Ray Coleman, John Covode, Kay Covode, Fred Fisher, John Hill, Tom Hitchcock, Alice Hondzinski, Jay Howe, Neil Jeffrey, Jim Johnston, Sewall K. Kepner, John Landon, Edwin R. Ling, Sue W. Ling, Kathy Mauffray, Charles Maumas, Mack McCarty, W.P. McCutchon, John McPhail, Mark Minegar, John Middleton, Joe Murrow, Joe Perniciaro, Fred Phillips, Pamela Quinn, Gus Rapp, Bob Riddle, Ted Reboul, Jr., Christian Reab, Larry Roberts, Lucimarian Roberts, Walter Russo, Harry Scharf, George Schroeder, Steve Southern, Scotty Thomson, Jack Wilbanks and Sylvia Young.

*Dwyn would serve until Terry would take office and would do so as required thereafter.

CHAPTER 9: THE DECEASED

Those members of the church who have passed on, whose memories are etched in plaques in the narthex, as of the publication of this memorial in the order of their deaths are:

Anne A. McCutchon
Bessie Wingo
Mrs. A.G. Wilson
Laura O'Leary
Charles J. Gallassero
Christian L. Reab
Camille Lamphier
George P. Fillingame
Nellie Hadley
Felix P. Miller
Jordan Shearer
Charles H. Faust
Mrs. Edward Crawford
Robert M. Teague
Sewall K. Kepner
James C. DuPriest
Winthrop P. Baker
Ethel Schearer
Catherine Whitehill
Kirkland Rheams
James H. Campbell
Allie Sportono
Bessie Mounger
Charlotte Burns
Rev. E.A. Lindsey
Newton Tarleton
Orell Duke
Norman Renshaw
T.T. (Ted) Reboul
Bertha L. Reab
Earl F. Gates
Florrie Prewitt
Fred Phillips
Buelah Phillips
Stella Rheams
Lorraine Cuendet
Doris Thomson
Jane Lindsey
Muriel Fisher
Marion Reboul
Robert Cuendet
Charles Maumas
Hilda Salinger
Bruce D. Irving
Howard Haines
Joseph Leech
Camille D. Schaefer
John M. Middleton
Dottie M. Gates
Marion C. Englehorn
Ingrid H. Ling
Betty Crockett

CHAPTER 10: THE CURRENT MEMBERS & FRIENDS

In the early days of the church, there was a membership roll of active members which listed the members in the sequential order in which they had joined the church. For current members, as listed below, this number has been placed after the Christian name in parentheses. They are Lilla Adams, Frank Alford, Betty Ashe, Nolen Barrioff, Bob & Jean Barrett, Clinton & Pat Bartman, Perry Berens, Bob & Charlene Bergman, Chris, Vonnie & Niccole Bodenschatz, James & Margaret Boyce, Elva Buran, Gail Campbell, Glen Carson, Helen Cazaubon, Ray & Kay Coleman, John & Kay Covode, Billy & David Cox, Tom & Kathryn Crockett, Dan & Ellie D'Antoni, Max (75) & Faye (76) Dossett, Harold & Bea Eddins, Eddie Englehorn, Prentis Furlow, Robert & Juel Gabe, Selma George, Helen Hall, Kathy Hanson, Una Harris, John (128) & Eleanor (129) Hill, Burrell Hindsman, Dan & Alice Hondzinski, Conrad (218) & Susan Howe, Leona Hughes, Melvin (294) & Barb (295) Irving, Evelyn (146) Jacob, Florence John, Etheleen Johnson, Jim, June & Joel Johnston, Richard, Alice & Tim Jones, Margie Leech, Ed (136), Sue, Rodger & Kristin Ling, Jimmy & Sharon Loiacano, Wade & Karen Long, Larry & Anne Magruder, Mike & Carol Manley, Lex & Kathy (305) Mauffray, Meg McIntosh, Gertrude Middleton, Ruth Miller, Dwyn & Chris (307) Mounger, Joe & Vivian Murrow, Gregory & Theresa Noll, Valerie Odem, Bill & Bonnie Oglesby, Joe & Teresa Perniciaro, Billy (298) & Sandra (299) Power, Donna Kay (221) Pullman, Gus & Marian Rapp, Bob & Jackie Riddle, Larry & Lucimarian Roberts, Joy Russell, Penny Rodrique, Richard (29) and Christal (3) Schaefer, Lucy Shearer, Warren & Agnes Sick, Sr., Warren (222) Sick, Jr., Paul & Jeanne Smith, Dr. Steve, Donna, Lauren, Molly & Charles Southern, Roy & Arvilla Stoddard, Mabel Tryon, Christine Tunis, Francis (14) Voight, Eugene & Suzanne Wagar, Marguerite Wood, Lucy Shearer, Ed & Sylvia Young.

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Selected Church Bulletins and personal memory of Max Dossett, John Hill, Dwyn Mounger, Christal Schaefer & the author. Photographs: Cover Original Watercolor by Sue Ling, Back Cover by Cliff Ling, pages 6, 10, 13, 19, 45 & 46 from the Archives of the Church, page 42 from NASA, pages 29, 30, 52 & 63 from personal collections, page 70 by & from James Munroe, and pages 64 & 71 by Jimmy Loiacano.

ERRATA SHEET

There are a number of typographical errors. For example, on page 43, ninth line, the date should be 1968. So, also, to the fact, it is now understood, that Norm Renshaw preceded Bessie Mounger in death, as not now reflected on page 44. Moreover, John Covode's name is misspelled on page 55, Penny Rodrique's on page 65 and Nolen Barrios' on page 75.

Sometimes, the computer went awry. To this end, page 48 does not reflect that Joe and Vivian Murrow were married in New York. Further, sometimes the author's brain was askew, as the omission of Rodger Ling's marriage to the former Annie Wilkinson on page 65 shows. See, in addition, Max Dossett not being listed as an Elder on page 73 and the following names being omitted on page 75: Polly Clemmons, Dorothy Clark, James, Susan and Janie Johnston, Cliff and Lorelei Ling, Michael Manley, Edwina Stapler and Magan Winter.

Furthermore, the deceased saints listed on page 74 are not, except generally, in a chronological order. Too notable not to be added were the deaths of Beatrice Eddins and Dr. Gus W. Rapp. Both were leaders who will sorely be missed by all who knew them.

Equally disturbing was the omission from the manuscript of the paragraphs that had been carefully drafted about the Southern family and the contributions it has made to the church. So, also, re Paul and Jeanne Smith joining the church and Paul's work with the Boy Scouts of America. Finally, there are those in the church, like Lilla Adams, who are so quiet that their contributions go virtually unnoticed.

Sorry for these and those that will be detected later. I did my best.

Ed Ling

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The First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis was conceived in 1949, was born in 1957 and moved to its present location in 1960. It has, during these years, weathered a number of severe storms, been seasoned thereby, and now faces the future with confidence, not only in its God but itself as well.

Ed & Sue Ling

Edwin Rodger Ling, Sr. is an eclectic, retired lawyer and government official. A native of Wichita, Kansas, he is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Grinnell College and has a Juris Doctor Degree from the NYU Law School. He has authored four other non-fiction books and currently resides in Pass Christian, Mississippi with his beloved wife Sue. A New Orleans native, Sue is a 1980 Graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder. Both Ed and Sue are elders in the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis and are active in the Presbyterian and Reformed Renewal Ministries, International. They have five children and one grandchild between them.